

THE POUR

Turn a Colorblind Eye to Your Spring Wine



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

By [ERIC ASIMOV](#)
Published: May 9, 2013

I don’t have a favorite season. Each offers its particular joys. Mostly, I love the parade of four distinct seasons, which makes me happy to be a Northeasterner.

Multimedia



Spring in a Bottle: 20 Great Wines for \$20

Seasonal moods and customs dictate the clothes we wear, the foods we prefer and, perhaps in a more subtle way, the wines we select. More subtle because wine choice extends beyond mere temperature in a way that woolen sweaters do not. Even though rosés and gossamer whites are ordinarily associated with summer, powerful reds still appear. Why? Because thick steaks and the wines

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE+

SAVE

E-MAIL

SHARE

PRINT

REPRINTS

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2013 OFFICIAL SELECTION

Log in to see what your friends are sharing [Log In With Facebook](#) on nytimes.com. [Privacy Policy](#) | [What's This?](#)

What’s Popular Now

Museum of Modern Art Reconsiders Razing of Folk Art Museum

Save the Wolves of Isle Royale National Park

- MOST E-MAILED

MOST VIEWED
1. WELL

The Scientific 7-Minute Workout
2. In Hours, Thieves Took \$45 Million in A.T.M. Scheme
3. WELL

Owning a Dog Is Linked to Reduced Heart Risk
4. TOOL KIT

Outsmarting Smartphone Thieves
5. MATTER

Years Underground, Hatching an Invasion
6. MOVIE REVIEW | 'THE GREAT GATSBY'

Shimmying Off the Literary Mantle
7. Citrus Disease With No Cure Is Ravaging

that love them are never more than a grill away.

Spring is a transitional season for wines. In the end, weight, not color, is the crucial factor in selecting bottles.

I often make the case that the great intersection between price and quality occurs in the range of \$15 to \$25 a bottle. Obviously, it's possible to find a great value for \$10 a bottle, but those wines are few and the odds of striking gold go up exponentially at a slightly higher price. In the range of \$15 to \$20, many bottles not only offer great pleasure simply because they are delicious, they also have something to say about where they came from and the people who made them. These wines appeal to the mind and heart as well as to the taste buds.

I've picked 20 great spring wines (listed here randomly) for \$20 each. This is an arbitrary figure, I know. I could just as easily have found 15 great bottles at \$15 or used the entire \$15 to \$25 range. And to be honest, many of these \$20 bottles in fact cost \$19.99, because, as has been true since the first Stone Age merchant etched a come-on into rock, retailers understand the power of pricing just below the big decimal change.

With these 20 bottles, I feel as if I've only begun an exploration that could yield dozens more great wines from all over the world. I made my selections without repeating any of the [choices I made last summer or fall](#). All of those wines remain superb choices, even if the vintage has changed, or the season. Remember: it's not the weather that dictates the wine so much as the food.

20 Great Spring Wines

1. Dr. Bürklin-Wolf Pfalz Bürklin Estate Riesling Trocken 2011

If you've ever wondered what the wine description "mineral" implies, try this dry riesling. It is pure mineral, rich but not heavy, tangy and textured. Dr. Bürklin-Wolf has been making excellent dry rieslings for years. The Bürklin Estate is its entry-level wine, offering a delicious taste of the depth and complexity of the more expensive single-vineyard wines. (Europvin U.S.A., Van Nuys, Calif.)

2. Céline et Laurent Tripoz Crémant de Bourgogne Brut Nature 2011

The no-dosage method of making sparkling wine is a difficult balancing act. In ordinary sparkling wine, a sweet solution, or dosage, is added at the end of the production process to offset the acidity of the wine. Omitting it can sometimes produce a harshly austere wine, but when done properly the wine can be exceptionally pure and precise. This is a superb no-dosage sparkling wine, made entirely of chardonnay by a tiny estate in the Mâconnais. It's creamy yet light, dry, straightforward and graceful. (Selection Massale, San Leandro, Calif.)

3. Domaine Agapé Crémant d'Alsace Émotion Brut NV

Alsace is often an excellent source for good sparkling wine values, and here's one. Émotion is made of a combination of pinot blanc and pinot noir, which gives it a little more weight than a blanc de blancs. It's dry, savory and refreshing, with an intriguing saline note among the flavors. (Savio Soares Selections, Manhasset, N.Y.)

4. Domaine Marcel Deiss Alsace 2010

Jean-Michel Deiss is always fascinating. He has long promoted the idea that terroir is best expressed by blending multiple sorts of grapes grown in a particular site. This entry-level wine, made with all 13 white varieties permitted in Alsace, offers a window into what can be found in his high-end terroir wines. It's golden, crisp and refreshing, with



Florida Groves



8. OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR
[The Next Pandemic: Not if, but When](#)



9. OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS
[Predator and Prey, a Delicate Dance](#)



10. PAUL KRUGMAN
[Bernanke, Blower of Bubbles?](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

[Show My Recommendations](#)



One perspective on the best places to retire

ALSO IN BUSINESS »

- [Why I'm \(sort of\) ignoring Mother's Day](#)
- [A call to refinance private student loans](#)

nytimes.com

BUSINESS



Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Retail Display Wine Racks](#)

Up to 20% Off & Quick Shipping

Sell More Wine with Quality Storage

www.WineCellarInnovations.com

succulent, lingering flavors of citrus, honey and minerals. (Angel's Share Wine Imports, Brooklyn, N.Y.)

5. Benanti Etna Bianco Biancodicaselle 2010

Mount Etna, an active volcano on Sicily, is [best known for its red wines](#). But the white wines can be terrific as well, like this one from Benanti, one of Etna's old-timers. It's made entirely from the carricante grape, grown almost 3,000 feet up in the foothills, and it's simply delicious: dry, savory and lip-smacking. (Tradizione Imports, New York)

6. Edmunds St. John Bone-Jolly Gamay Noir Rosé El Dorado County Witters Vineyard 2012

Why wait until summer for rosé? Steve Edmunds is one of the few American producers to work with gamay, the grape of Beaujolais, which he gets from a vineyard in California gold country. His red gamay is always worth seeking out. This rosé is fragrant, with a light berry scent. It's dry, slightly herbal and seriously good.

7. Moraitis Santorini Assyrtiko 2011

One of today's great pleasures is easy access to wines that 15 to 20 years ago were little more than a footnote to most of the world. Case in point: assyrtiko from Santorini, an exquisitely tangy, lively wine that is a joy to pair with seafood. The 2011 Moraitis is earthy and juicy, with an anise edge to it. (VOS Selections, New York)

8. Filippi Soave Colli Scaligeri Vigne della Bra 2009

Although grapes have long been grown on what is now the Filippi estate, the family began bottling its own wine only a decade or so ago. It is now among the producers in the Veneto that are restoring the luster to Soave. The '09 Vigne della Bra, made entirely of garganega, the best Soave grape, and grown on a special high-elevation parcel, is deep and dry, with bright, tangy mineral flavors. (Polaner Selections, Mount Kisco, N.Y.)

9. François Pinon Vouvray Les Trois Argiles 2010

If not the world's single most underrated grape, chenin blanc is certainly among the contenders. Pinon's wines are among my favorite Vouvrais, and the 2010 vintage was particularly good. Les Trois Argiles is off-dry, with a bright spot of residual sugar, but the sweetness is balanced out by lively acidity. Juicy, earthy, honey-touched with ripe mineral flavors. (Louis/Dressner Selections, New York)

10. Philippe Raimbault Sancerre Apud Sariaicum 2011

Who doesn't like Sancerre? You'd be surprised. Among certain wine geeks, Sancerre symbolizes the unthinking populace who glaze over at the restaurant wine list and simply ask for what's familiar. No doubt Sancerre appeals to that demographic, but it shouldn't undercut the notion that Sancerre accounts for many excellent sauvignon blancs, like this lovely, restrained blend of tropical fruit and minerality. Delicious. (T. Edward Wines, New York)

11. Louis Michel & Fils Petit Chablis 2010

Louis Michel makes pure, precise, focused Chablis. Petit Chablis is the least of the Chablis appellations, and often signals a generic sort of wine. But good producers have a way of coaxing out from it the essential elements of the Chablis identity, the most distinctive of all chardonnays. This 2010 is a tad fruitier than a typical Chablis, yet it also has its beautiful saline, seashell character. (Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, Ala.)

12. Heitz Cellar Napa Valley Chardonnay 2011

This is my kind of Napa chardonnay, not oaky or extravagant but bright and vibrant, with savory, chalky, citrus flavors and a restrained touch of oak. Heitz is one of Napa's old guard, better known for its excellent cabernets, but its chardonnay is also well worth seeking out.

13. Castello di Volpaia Chianti Classico 2009

Chianti is a wine that I drink year round, and this is an excellent rendition, made entirely of the sangiovese grape. It's fresh, with smoky, lively flavors of bitter cherry with a juicy, refreshing quality, well structured and balanced. (Wilson Daniels, St. Helena, Calif.)

14. Cà de Noci Sottobosco I.G.T. 2009

This gently sparkling red wine from Emilia-Romagna is reminiscent of a Lambrusco, but the producer, Cà de Noci, goes its own way, operating outside the official appellation system, so it cannot be called Lambrusco. Regardless, I loved this wine from my first taste. It's savory, meaty, funky, low in alcohol, discernibly tannic, resolutely dry and superb. (Louis/Dressner Selections)

15. Mastroberardino Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio 2010

Mastroberardino is one of the historic wine producers in Campania, and still one of the best. The poetically named Lacryma Christi (Tears of Christ) is made of the piedirosso grape, indigenous to the volcanic soils near Vesuvio. It's light-bodied and graceful, dry and lightly fruity, and will take well to a chill. (A Leonardo LoCascio Selection/Winebow, New York)

16. Red Tail Ridge Finger Lakes Pinot Noir 2010

Not everybody agrees that the Finger Lakes are pinot noir territory, but I've had enough good ones to see excellent potential there. These are cool-climate pinot noirs, more reminiscent of German spätburgunders than of American or French pinot noirs. Red Tail Ridge's 2010 is pale ruby, delicate, crisp and light-bodied, fragrant with flowers and red fruits.

17. Las Orcas Rioja Crianza Decenio 2006

Spring still has its cooler moments, and this intense Rioja is just right for sweater-weight evenings. The Las Orcas Crianza is 100 percent tempranillo, and, though it's already seven years old, it's still young and slightly tannic. The wine is deep and rich with spicy, potent flavors of red fruit and a lovely, herbal edge that lingers. (Zev Rovine Selections/Bon Vivant Imports, Boise, Idaho)

18. Charles Helfenbein Côtes du Rhône Brézème 2011

Brézème is a long-neglected area on the southern end of the northern Rhône Valley that has been resurrected in the last decade or so by producers like Éric Texier and, more recently, Charles Helfenbein. This is meaty and savory, 100 percent syrah, with an aroma of violets. It wouldn't hurt to decant this wine. (A Thomas Calder Selection/Moonlight Wine, New York)

19. Domaine des Billards St.-Amour 2010

The 2010 vintage is superb for [cru Beaujolais](#), wines from the 10 villages thought to be of sufficient quality that their names are appellations. This complex, delicate, graceful St.-Amour, from the northernmost of the crus, combines aromas of red fruit with earthy, sturdy, lingering mineral flavors. (David Bowler Wine, New York)

20. Château Milon St.-Émilion Cuvée Caprice 2010

You don't often find Bordeaux from a brand-name appellation at this price. This is a lovely St.-Émilion, with flavors of sweet red fruit edged with minerals. It's lightly tannic and not especially complex, but deliciously straightforward and pleasing. (Polaner Selections)

    SAVE  E-MAIL  SHARE



Try unlimited access to NYTimes.com for just 99¢. [SEE OPTIONS »](#)

Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

-  Wines
-  Spring (Season)

Ads by Google [what's this?](#)

[Best Skin Firming Creams](#)

An Unbiased Review List of The Top
Performing Skin Tighteners In 2013
www.SkinCareSearch.com/FaceLifting

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



TRAVEL »



36 Hours in Las Vegas

DANCE »



New York City Ballet
Season Gala

OPINION »

**Taking Note:
The Latest
G.O.P. Temper
Tantrum**
Republican senators
boycotted the vote for
the president's E.P.A.
nominee.

THEATER »



'On Your Toes,' With
Christine Baranski

OPINION »



Letters: The Health Law
and Its Incentives

MAGAZINE »



How Does Shonda Rhimes
Keep Making Hits?