

APRIL 2008

ForbesLife

SPRING TRAVEL

WILD ZAMBEZI

**DESIGNER
SUBMARINES**

**GREECE
ON \$50,000
A DAY**

**NEW
NIMBLE
TRAVEL
GEAR**

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NEVER
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FOR
MOTORCYCLE
SCHOOL**

**THE
WORLD'S
MOST-
TRAVELED
MAN**





When it's your house, the "house wine" has got to represent. Fortunately, the wine market is bursting at the seams with bargains—you don't really have to compromise to stay stocked up on affordable bottles of pleasure and distinctiveness.

In part, you can thank globalization. Whatever the mixed effects elsewhere, it has been an unqualified win for American wine buyers. To my taste, Europe—notably Spain, Italy and southern France—is still the best bet for head-swiveling-double-take wine deals, but lots of other places are bottling them, too. As a result, many European wineries and their U.S. importers (so far, at least) have chosen to tighten their belts rather than take big price increases to compensate for the sagging dollar. They know that Americans will simply turn to producers from places

25 Under \$25

Forget the price tag—
you'll love what's
in the bottle.

like Paso Robles and Walla Walla, or to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America.

Right now, today, seductive wines priced at \$25 and (well) under are pouring into retail stores and online shopping sites. As always, there is some heavy sifting to be done, but the gleaming nuggets are there for the taking.

So give your house wine a major upgrade—and recession? Stack some cases of

the wines below in your cellar and ride the thing out.

(Prices are sample retail; importers are listed to help locate the foreign wines.)

BORDEAUX-STYLE REDS

**Château Haut-Grudaud 2005,
Côtes de Bourg | \$15**

• The lesser-known, “satellite” appellations of Bordeaux are chock-full of bar-

gains from the stellar-but-pricey 2005 vintage. A flat-out steal, this Merlot-based wine, with its refined, ripe tannins, has the perfectly tuned balance of a grander Bordeaux with a more immediately accessible charm. (Alain Junguenet Selections)

**Tenuta di Arceno 2004,
“PrimaVoce,” Tuscany | \$20**

• The “first voice”—the entry-level bottling—from this estate owned by California’s Jess Jackson is a Merlot/Cabernet blend of graceful depth and sophistication. A super-bargain via international winemaker Pierre Seillan. (Sovereign Imports)

**Mollydooker 2006 Cabernet
Sauvignon, “The Maitre D’,”
South Australia | \$20**

• Sarah and Sparky Marquis—also of Marquis Philips fame—went big (16 percent alcohol worth) on this dense, opaque, tooth-purpling red that billows a noseful of clove, black plum and cassis. Cabernet, but orbiting the far reaches of the Bordeaux-style universe. (Grapes International)

MEDIUM-RICH REDS

**Abadia Retuerta 2003,
“Selección Especial,” Vino de la Tierra
de Castilla y León | \$18**

• It takes a harsh, desertlike climate—in this case the northern reaches of the Duero River region of Spain—to produce a Tempranillo (75 percent), Cabernet and Merlot blend of such silky, violet-perfumed finesse. Swiss pharma giant Novartis has put 20 years of steady investment behind this once-obscure property (whose history dates to 1146), and it has blossomed. (Kobrand)

Can Blau 2006, Montsant | \$18

• I buy this wine every year and feel a bit bereft when my last bottle’s empty. From the other side of the mountains from Spain’s famed Priorat—and sharing many of the same soils and conditions—this blend of Mazuelo (Carignan), Syrah and Garnacha (Grenache) lofts an intricate aroma something like...let me take a stab at it: spiced wild berries cooked into a pastry with vanilla icing. Ah, heck, just give it a spin. (Jorge Ordoñez Selections)

discover



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Moir Forbes reminisces about her family's passion for wine in the Spring issue of Fleming's online magazine. Go to www.FlemingsSteakhouse.com and click on the link.

Villa Maria 2006 Pinot Noir, "Private Bin," Marlborough | \$20

• It's hard to find truly Pinot-y Pinot at this price, and Villa Maria is a reliable name to keep in mind. A warm '06 harvest in New Zealand goosed up the richness in this soft, easy-drinking red and heightened its aroma of freshly crushed cherries. (Vineyard Brands)

Mastroberardino 2005 Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio Rosso | \$22

• Wine for European tastes, from southern Italy's great champion of traditional grapes—in this case, Piediroso grown in the volcanic soils of Mt. Vesuvius. (Google it for the charming legend of "The Tears of Christ.") Smooth and accessible, but not heavy or "fruit forward" in the New World way, it seems to blossom and take on gravitas when sipped with a grilled steak or plate of penne alla Bolognese. (Wilson Daniels)

Allegrini 2004 "Palazzo della Torre," Veronese | \$24

• The Allegrini family, Valpolicella innovators, employ a variation of the traditional *ripasso* method for this single-vineyard wine, drying 30 percent of the grapes for several months before adding them back in to ferment the fall's wine. At first pour, it's all about the dense but polished texture; then the complex, clove, blackberry-inflected depths begin to assert themselves. Wow. (Winebow)

JUICY, FULLER-BODIED REDS

Zette 2003 Malbec, Cahors | \$11

• The ground-floor wine from Domaine de Lagrezette, which is looking to put the once-famous "black wines" of Cahors, in the southwest of France, back on the map. A stone bargain, with lush depths of wonderful sappy, ripe blueberry/blackberry fruit. (Frederick Wildman)

Bodegas Renacer "Punto Final" 2005 Malbec Reserva, Mendoza | \$18

• From low-yielding, 50-year-old vines, this is opaque, nearly plum-skin-colored, with a sweet, ripe blackberry/black cherry character just emerging—it merits another three to five years in the bottle, and carries its 14.8 percent alcohol with deft, polished grace. An opinion-changer, if one

were needed, about the top-flight potential of Argentine wine. (Winebow)

D'Arenberg 2004 Shiraz, "The Footbolt," McLaren Vale | \$19

• Chester Osborn's labor-intensive, old-school winemaking (foot-stomped grapes, basket press)—plus d'Arenberg's excellent vineyards—yields some of Australia's most succulently layered Shiraz/Syrah, including this perfumed beauty that evolves sur-

prising depths in the glass. Named for a racehorse whose early-20th-century winning streak was a foundation of the Osborn family fortunes. (Old Bridge Cellars)

Pierre Usseglio 2006, Côtes-du-Rhône | \$23

• From the highly regarded Châteauneuf-du-Pape producer, a Grenache/Mourvedre blend with a deep, worked-in dark fruit character; very rich but comes across with

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- Architectural tour and dinner at Quintessa
- Barrel tasting and lunch at Conn Creek
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freshness and elegance. A red to linger over with a slice or five of peppery dried sausage. (Wines of France)

ROSES

Soter 2006 Rosé, North Valley | \$20

• Winemaker Tony Soter has transplanted his painstaking, vineyard-focused efforts from California to Oregon, and this vivid pink Pinot Noir/Pinot Gris/Chardonnay demonstrates what he's up to. A substantial-feeling, dry, concentrated wine with the flavor punch of a light red; a few sips in, you realize it is gracefully light itself—rosé mission perfectly accomplished.

Château d'Esclans 2006 "Whispering Angel," Côte de Provence | \$22

• The new South of France venture of Sacha—son of American wine great Alexis—Lichine produces the world's most expensive (by a long shot) rosés. This pup of the litter, crafted by former Mouton Rothschild winemaker Patrick Leon, is pale pink but surprisingly hearty, with a dry, firm, minerally brightness. The toast of the Côte d'Azur yachting set, I'm told. (Château d'Esclans)

MEDIUM-BODIED WHITES

Alois Lageder 2006 "Haberle" Pinot Bianco, Alto Adige | \$18

• From the sub-Alpine northeast of Italy—in the great overlap of Italian and Austrian culture—and biodynamicist Lageder, this food-flexible wine delivers a ripe, Chardonnay-like yellow apple and peach fruit but in an elegant and more tapered, cool-climate style. (Dalla Terra Winery Direct)



St. Supéry 2007 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley | \$21

• Fans of this popular wine get another juicy gem from winemaker Michael Beaulac. An un-Chardonnay with true varietal pineapple/grapefruit notes mingled with menthol-y herbs in a concentrated white that cuts a pleasingly lean profile.

FULL-BODIED WHITES

L'Ecole No. 41 2006 Semillon, Columbia Valley | \$16

• From one of Walla Walla's pioneers and a Washington favorite for many years, the '06 is a custardy, melony mouthful (but dry) that is a roast-chicken-enlivening wine par excellence.

Tablas Creek 2006 Côtes de Tablas Blanc, Paso Robles | \$20

• A white Rhône ringer from California's Central Coast and the owners of Château-neuf-du-Pape's Château Beaucastel. Full-on rich and creamy, with an exotic musky, melony, apricot-y character that finishes with clean vibrancy.

Sanford 2005 Chardonnay, Santa Barbara County | \$21

• Cool-climate fruit from three renowned central coast vineyards tells the tale here—bright, graceful and palate-refreshing, with lively aromas of tropical melon.

Thelema 2005 Chardonnay, Stellenbosch | \$25

• The rugged mountains don't look like Burgundy, but this South African beauty is a ringer for Meursault: creamy on the palate, with lovely pear fruit integrated with vanilla oakiness. (Cape Classics)

BUBBLES

Mionetto (nonvintage) Prosecco Brut | \$13

• Like a warm-weather picnic in a bottle. This lightly sparkling Italian wine has a penetrating, intense character, with notes of apple, lemon and anise. Among other things, the perfect base for a mimosa or Bellini. (Mionetto)

Roederer Estate (nonvintage) Brut, Anderson Valley | \$22

• My vote for world's most reliable—and pleasurable—Champagne-style wine in this price range. The Mendocino County operation of Champagne Louis Roederer makes this Chardonnay/Pinot Noir blend with a New World, ripe Gala apple and pear juiciness, but also with an Old World feeling of restraint. Beats many a French Champagne in blind tastings.

OTHER

Warre's (nonvintage) White Porto | \$13

• Lusciously, palate-coatingly rich and exotic, white port on the rocks is an addictive warm-weather aperitif. Warre's version nails it, wafting a complex spice of licorice, walnut and candied apricots. Spritz at will. (Vineyard Brands) •

CRISP WHITES

Poet's Leap 2006 Riesling, Columbia Valley | \$22

• America's finest Riesling hails from Washington State, part of the Long Shadows project of joint ventures, this one with German luminary Armin Diel from the Nahe region. A round, impressive mouthful for Riesling, its ripe melon and peach character is amplified by its spot-on balance.

Txomin Etxaniz 2006 Guetaria | \$25

• These white Txokolina wines (that's "choko-leena") are summertime Basque seafood staples. Pouring from a foot or so height brings up the wine's light fizziness; the lean, clean palate-awakening acidity does the rest. (Tempranillo Imports)