

The TWELVE

SUMMER 2009

Spec'ssm

YOU LOVE GREAT WINE ... but you also want some "everyday value wines" that taste really good. So do I. I love great wine, but \$15 is about my limit for my *everyday drinking wines*. To me, *value* mean a wine tastes like it costs more than it does and *everyday drinking* means wine that goes well with my life and the sorts of food I eat on a daily basis. Here are twelve everyday value picks, all priced under \$15.

- Bear Dalton, Spec's Fine Wine Buyer

EL PORTILLO Malbec, Valle de Uco - Mendoza, 2007

12x750ml \$8.99 \$100.63

This 14% alcohol, 100% Malbec was made utilizing a cold soak for color extraction and no oak (to preserve fruit). The result is a wine with a deep purple color, hazy and medium clear with good legs; dry, medium full-bodied with softly balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. It is a chewy, juicy black fruit Malbec offering blueberry and dark cherry-berry fruit accented with notes of coffee and coffee grounds, earth, black pepper, dust, and subtle spice accented with stony gravelly terroir. Although the tech sheet says it is unwooded, it tastes like it got at least some oak exposure. Long and tasty. Fine. BS: 89VHR.

ITALO CESCO Pinot Grigio, IGT Veneto, 2007

12x750ml \$14.50 \$163.24

This 100% Pinot Gris is all tank fermented with no malo-lactic fermentation resulting in a straw colored, day bright and clear wine with good legs and a dry, medium-light-bodied palate offering crisp acidity, very light phenolics and a long finish. It has fresh dry crisp green pear, pear peel, and lime fruit with a mineral, almost salty terroir note. With no oak to muddy it up, it is fresh, focused, and pure; alive-in-the-mouth. Really Fine. BS: 90VHR.

KESSELER R Riesling QbA, Rheingau, 2006

12x750ml \$12.74 \$143.47

This 100% Riesling blend of leased vineyards and younger vines from Kessler's estate vineyards is all grown on slate soils. The wine is almost Mosel-like in style with lots of lime, apple, and peach Riesling fruit accented with exotic spice, floral notes, and wet stone and slate minerality with just a little fruity sweetness. Crisply balanced and delicious; quite long, thrilling. Really Fine. Bear's Score: 90 points.

JRE Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006

12x750ml \$14.99 \$167.83

Native Texan John Robert Eppler assembled this 14.4% alcohol 100% Cabernet Sauvignon blend offering mostly black cherry berry fruit accented with notes of tobacco and dusty gravel with a hint of pencil shavings and black pepper. It is dark purple with fine legs, bright and almost opaque with a full body, balanced acidity, and chewy phenolics. Perfect with a grilled top sirloin. Fine. BS: 90HR.

Mas de CADENET Rosé Cotes De Provence 2007

12x750ml \$14.81 \$166.75

In the classic Provençal amphora bottle, this mostly Grenache (with some Syrah and Cinsault) rosé offers a classic dry rosé feel with good strawberry fruit and a note of black pepper. Quite dry and featuring a hint of earthiness, it is a far cry from the bubblegum-style of many White Zinfandel-influenced rosés. It makes a lovely picnic wine and is perfect with spicy seafood soups such as gumbo and bouillabaisse. Really Very Good. BS: 87VHR.

PEIRANO The Other White, Lodi, 2006

12x750ml \$11.70 \$131.76

This 13.8% alcohol blend of 65% Chardonnay, 25% Sauvignon Blanc, and 10% Viognier is straw colored, bright and clear with good legs; dry, medium full-bodied with softly balanced acidity. Ripe and rich with juicy tree fruit (pear and apple) and citrus notes with subtle mineral terroir; it is creamy textured with a medium, long finish. Succulent, rounded, and soft in the mouth, this is a very rich white for everyday drinking. Very Good. BS: 86+HR.

CLOS du BOIS Reserve Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, 2007

12x750ml \$13.29 \$147.83

This 14.5% alcohol, 100% Chardonnay was whole cluster pressed and barrel-fermented (with full ML) and aged 8 months in 60% French, 40% Eastern European oak barrels (40% new). Yellow straw in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity. Fresh, forward, and juicy with citrus, tropical fruit, and tree fruit with subtle mushroomy earth terroir; obvious oak with a hint of butter; long, clean finish; rounded but elegant. Lovely-in-the-mouth. Really Fine. BS: 90+VHR.

YALUMBA "Y" Series Riesling, South Australia, 2008

12x750ml \$9.51 \$105.78

This 12% alcohol, 100% Riesling sees no oak and no malo-lactic fermentation. The result is straw-in color with green highlights, brilliant and clear with some legs; threshold sweetness, and medium-light-bodied with crisp acidity. Offering a subtle mineral terroir, this is a fresh, dryish, refreshing Riesling offering green apple, lime, and grapefruit with subtle floral notes and long clean finish. Try it as an aperitif, with fresh shellfish, or with moderately spiced dishes. Really Very Good. BS: 87HR.

HAHN Meritage, Central Coast, 2007

12x750ml \$13.43 \$151.23

This 14.5% alcohol blend of 31% Merlot, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Petit Verdot, 12% Malbec, and 9% Cabernet Franc was fermented in pumpover tanks and aged in all French oak barrels (60% new). It shows a dark red-purple color with good legs and is bright and medium clear; dry, medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. The result is a juicy fresh red and black fruit oriented wine with dusty gravelly earth, present oak, and notes of tobacco, black pepper, and exotic spice. Long and lively, it has a medium rich feel. Quite tasty. Really Fine. BS: 90HR.

PEIRANO The Other Red, Lodi, 2007

12x750ml \$11.70 \$131.76

This 13.8% alcohol blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, and 10% Syrah is deep red in color, bright and clear with well formed legs; dry and medium-full-bodied with a softly balanced acidity, medium phenolics and a subtle earthiness. It is spicy, grapey, juicy, fruit forward (but fresh and balanced) offering notes of raspberry, black cherry, other crushed dark fruit. Hints at tobacco, coffee grounds, black pepper. Simple but flavorful. Fine. BS: 89+. VHR.

GEMTREE Tadpole Chardonnay-Viognier, McLaren Vale, 2007

12x750ml \$10.99 \$124.44

20% of this co-fermented blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Viognier is fermented, undergoes malolactic fermentation (ML), and is aged one month in new oak barrels; the balance is fermented and aged in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks and does not undergo ML. The result is a fresh refreshing, crisply balanced fruit-dominated Chardonnay offering citrus and tree fruit with hints of honeysuckle and apricot and a touch of limestone minerality. It has just enough richness for balance but the oak and ML components are integrated compliments that stay in the background. Delicious. Fine. BS: 89+HR.

d'ARENBERG Stump Jump Red, McLaren Vale, 2007

12x750ml \$10.38 \$115.50

This 14% alcohol blend of 50% Grenache, 29% Shiraz, and 21% Mourvedre was fermented in concrete tanks with submerged caps, pressed off in a traditional basket press, and aged in tank; no oak is used. It is deep red in color, bright and almost clear with well formed legs; dry and medium-to-full-bodied, with a softly balanced acidity, medium plus phenolics and a subtle gravelly note. The result is a juicy, rustic, robust GSM offering red and black fruit accented with coffee grounds, black pepper, white pepper, and gravelly earth. Fine. BS: 88+. VHR.

Special for SPEC's KEY holders:

Buy a mixed case consisting of one 750ml bottle of each of the TWELVE selections for only \$137.52, a savings of \$9.51 over SPEC's already low cash bottle price. This special price is good through 08/31/09. UPC: 00000656306

