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# The International Wine Review

Special Report  
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## South African Value Wines Under \$20

### Introduction



On our recent trip to South Africa we were amazed by the highly dynamic wine scene we found. There are scores of new, young winemakers and freshly planted vineyards in remote regions. Everywhere we travelled we discovered exciting wines that we couldn't

wait to write up in our Report # 30 **The Wines of South Africa**. This report is the largest and most comprehensive we have written to date. It includes hundreds of reviews and lists the top producers of each major variety and blend from Chenin Blanc to Pinotage. These wines are primarily premium and super premium wines priced at above \$20 in the U.S. market.

In this **Special Report** we present more than 175 great value wines of South Africa that are imported to the US. These are wines which sell for under \$20. While some of these wines are also included in Report #30, most are not, especially those wines selling for \$15 and under. Our goal is to inform budget-conscious consumers that South Africa, like Chile, Argentina, and Spain, is also producing high quality wines at affordable prices.

Many of the wines reviewed here are white and include: Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, and White blends. The reds consist of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinotage, Syrah, and Red Blends. Most of the whites are from the 2010 and 2011 vintages and most the reds from 2009 and 2010, all good to excellent vintages. A few of the reds are from 2008, a more problematic vintage.

Most of these great value wines are from high volume South African producers and are widely distributed in the U.S. They can be found in local wine shops, super markets and restaurants, often by the glass. They are also sold over the Web. At these prices, the wines of South Africa are well within reach of most consumers and offer a unique opportunity to get to know them.

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The Market for Value Wines

### What is a value wine?

A value wine is one that is priced under \$20. Compared to premium wines costing over \$20, value wines are usually not as concentrated or complex on the palate. To keep costs low, producers may seek out less expensive fruit from higher yielding vineyards located in less glamorous areas. The grapes may be machine harvested instead of hand-harvested, and be subjected to less rigorous sorting at the winery. The winemaker is more likely to ferment in stainless steel than in oak, and, when oak aged, oak staves, oak chips, and used barrels may replace the expensive new French oak used on premium wines.

These measures reduce costs and wine prices but can still produce very good wines. While not as rich and nuanced as expensive wines, value wines can offer abundant fresh fruit, medium weight palates, and good balance. These are the things we look for in value wines. Some wines exceed these standards and offer the richness and complexity that come with higher quality fruit, extended time on the lees, and maturing in oak barriques. We identify some of these exceptional values in our writeup below.

Mike Potashnik, Publisher

Don Winkler, Editor



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