

# The Cheapskate's Libation

Because this is not the time to break the bank on wine

BY CHRISTINA WATERS

People are hurtin'—but they must have wine! And with big holidays coming up, every wine purchase has to matter. Here's a group of econo-wines that will ease you through hard times.

## Special Treats at \$15–\$20

**Bonny Doon Syrah, Le Pousseur** soars with big bold black fruit flavors that cry for the dark meat of turkey, a Kobe steak or the traditional prime rib. Available around town for \$15.99–\$17.99.

**Storrs Central Coast Zinfandel** is winner of the State Fair's Gold Medal and Best of Region award and a knockout with robust foods, carne asada, burgers and pasta. Around \$18 at most stores.

**Thomas Fogarty Skyline Chardonnay** is a no-oak chardonnay that shoots fruit all over the place and satisfies the ABC (anything but chardonnay) drinker. All Santa Cruz Mountains with crisp pear, citrus and some spicy aspects. Available almost everywhere at \$14.99.

## For Holiday Gatherings: \$15 and Under

**Bonny Doon's Vin Gris de Cigare** is the perfect wine with

roast turkey, and this rosé is yours for \$13.99 from Shopper's Corner. Strawberries and smoke with an elegant finish. Looks gorgeous in the glass, too. **Ahlgren Syrah 2001**, a steal with smoky black fruit flavors, is on special between \$8.99 and \$10.99 at Boulder Creek Liquors, Johnny's, Felton Liquors, Scotts Valley Market, Ben Lomond Liquors and U-save. The splendid **Ahlgren Semillon 2005** for \$12.99 drinks like an elegant cross between a crisp sancerre and a rich chardonnay. It's big enough to partner your favorite gooey holiday cheeses, and a great match with seafoods and turkey. **Varner's** second-tier Foxglove label offers two outstanding values, both ranking very high on the Robert Parker-ometer. **Foxglove's Chardonnay 2007** will run you around \$15, and positively adores turkey, and the mighty **2006 Cabernet**—90 points from Parker!—costs a mere \$12 and is loaded with huge Paso Robles fruit. Check Vinocruz and Shopper's for Foxglove wines; for the premium Varner wines, look into Soif's holdings. **Thomas Fogarty Gewurztraminer** is an ideal wine to serve with turkey and is available almost everywhere for \$12.99–14.99. **Bonny Doon Sangiovese** is

biodynamically farmed and can be found as low as \$9.99 at Shopper's, U-Save Liquors, Scotts Valley and Ben Lomond Markets and Pleasure Point Wine and Spirits. Lots of spicy red fruit flavors with a long finish.

**Perrin Côtes du Rhone** provides a serviceable marriage of grenache and syrah that will work with beef, duck and turkey without damaging your holiday budget. Available for about \$8.99 at Shopper's and other enlightened emporia. Try **Garnacha de Fuego 2007 Old Vines**, \$8.99 at Cost Plus World Market, for when you've succumbed to holiday discount shopping and still need to deal with low-cost wine needs. This grenache from Argentina is amazingly sturdy and partners almost everything except a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

## Under \$8

**Bear Ridge Sauvignon Blanc.** From the folks from our local **Byington Winery** who felt that the rest of us needed some everyday wine to sip as our portfolios tank. The right choice with oysters, barbecue, turkey, fish tacos, or prawns and pasta. Available almost everywhere for \$7.99. Bear Ridge also does a friendly zinfandel as well, same price, loaded with cool

red raspberry flavors that cry out for lamb chops or pork roast. **Ravenswood**, bless 'em, does very decent California "Vintners Blends" of merlot and zinfandel, for a rock-bottom \$6.99 per bottle. Try Safeway, and other obvious spots. **Yellowtail Merlot** is a fine match for turkey and roasts, and will run no more than \$8 at almost any store on the West Coast. Even better is this Australian label's **Shiraz** for around \$7.

## Proud and Desperate?

Try hitting the wine aisles at Long's looking for recognizable labels. With luck you can still score some highly quaffable **Beringer** varietals, selling for a megadiscount of three bottles for \$10. **Crane Lake Cabernet Sauvignon 2005** from somewhere in Napa is definitely decent (think airplane wine). Chill it good and pour it without apologies—perfect with spicy Asian flavors, pizza, burgers. The cost? \$2.99 a bottle. Where? You know where: TJ's.

Stay focused. You can do this. And remember—friends don't let friends drink Two Buck Chuck!

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