

shopping |

Great Buy!

15 Terrific Wines \$15 and Under

There's no shame in drinking cheap wine—or bringing it to a dinner party. Terrific bottles in the \$15-and-under range are flooding the market. Two great sources are wine-shopper.com and wineaccess.com, where you can shop online (some shipping restrictions apply) or just compare prices at hundreds of stores across the country. —RICHARD NALLEY

WHITE

French Rabbit 2006 Chardonnay-Sauvignon Sold in "Petit" 250-milliliter cartons that have 10 percent of the carbon footprint of a glass bottle, this dry French wine gets its juicy, peachy character from the Chardonnay and a crisp edge from the sauvignon blanc. (\$11 per four-pack)

Dry Creek Vineyard 2007 Dry Chenin Blanc This longtime hit has a lot of what people love about California Chardonnay—that soft, easy-drinking quality—but with an exotic honeysuckle twist in a lighter-bodied frame. (\$12)

Tasca D'almerita 2007 Regaleali From one of Sicily's most reliable producers—a good name to know on a restaurant wine list—this light, bone-dry white seems to blossom and take on weight (with flavors suggesting Granny Smith apples and grapefruit) when sipped with foods like fried fish, roast chicken, or mildly spicy Asian dishes. (\$14)



FOOD

RED

Altano 2006 Look out for Portugal: Top producers are turning out dry table wines with remarkable success. Made from typical Port grapes, this sexy, spicy, medium-bodied red is an absolute bargain. (\$8)

Nieto Senetiner 2006 Malbec Reserva Malbec, more than any other grape, has put Argentina's wineries on the international radar screen. This one has a sneaky richness and the wafting aroma of freshly crushed blackberries. (\$11)

Vega Sindoa 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon-tempranillo One of Spain's top women winemakers, Concha Vecino, crafts this medium-bodied red, which combines spicy berry perfume with a European elegance. (\$12)

Strong Arms 2006 Shiraz This Shiraz is a dense, blossomy tooth-purpler from southern Australia's star winemaker Chris Ringland. The whimsical labels are designed by artist Mel Kadel. (\$12)

Chateau Haut-guilraud 2005 The big-name Bordeaux wines from the sensational 2005 vintage are priced into the stratosphere, but many lesser-known wineries also took advantage of the year's refined ripeness. This one is a flat-out steal: a classically graceful, smooth-drinking Merlot-based blend from the Côtes de Bourg area. (\$15)

Columbia Crest 2005 "H3" Cabernet Sauvignon This new wine, which goes national this month,

showcases Washington state's trademark fruit purity with surprisingly direct flavors of sappy red cherry and plum. (\$15)

ROSÉ

Borsao Rosé 2007 Spain remains the number one best bet for distinctive wine bargains; just check out this dry, boldly flavored bottling. The vivid, ruby-salmon-colored wine is packed with juicy red berry flavors lifted by a little citrus and a whiff of rose petal. (\$8)

Bonny Doon 2007 "Vin Gris De Cigare" From California Winemaker Randall Grahm, this mostly dry rose in a sensible screw-cap bottle tastes like unsweetened raspberry candy, and has the balance and the medium body to enliven everything from Thanksgiving turkey to a grilled pork chop. (\$15)

SPARKLING

Mionetto (Nonvintage) Prosecco Brut Lighter and with less intense bubblyness than Champagne, this Italian sparkling wine is all too easy to sip. It also makes a perfect base for a Sunday brunch mimosa—or serve it in champagne flutes and drop in a fresh strawberry. (\$14)

SHERRY

Emilio Lustau (Nonvintage) Dry Amontillado "Los Arcos" This wonderful sherry is a perfect end-of-the-day cocktail substitute. Crisp and loaded with flavor, it exudes a refined aroma that combines crushed walnuts, dried raisins, and apricots with a touch of smokiness. (\$15)

Taz 2007 Pinot Gris Much fuller-bodied than most Pinot Grigios, it's a smooth, melony, big white-wine mouthful meant to be enjoyed while young and fresh. (\$15)

Coopers Creek 2007 Sauvignon Blanc This New Zealand bottling revels in the full-throttle lime and grapefruit qualities of the grape and has a hint of exotic fruit. It works best with herby, vegetable-centric dishes: Greek salad, chicken quesadillas with salsa. (\$15)

Junk Food That Isn't

Snack foods are finally nailing that elusive combination: wholesome ingredients and can't-keep-your-hand-out-of-the-bag flavor. Food Should Taste Good is a line of stone-ground tortilla chips in varieties like cayenne-and-vinegar-spiked Buffalo. Arico's thin, crispy cassava chips are made from the fiber-packed root vegetable (try the Ginger on Fire). Riceworks' extra-crunchy brown rice crisps come in versions like wasabi and sesame-soy. Addicts can keep guilt to a minimum, since none of these products have artificial ingredients or trans fats. (\$3, foodshouldtastegood.com; \$3, www.aricofoods.com; \$5, riceworkssnacks.com)

Great Buy!



Haute Dogs

Known for posh products like foie gras and truffle butter, Dartagnan goes delightfully down-market with its new line of hot dogs—ultrameaty, all-natural, free of nitrates and nitrites, and available in innovative varieties like buffalo and duck, as well as crowd-pleasing beef and pork (\$8 for duck or buffalo four-pack, \$7 for beef or pork; dartagnan.com)

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STYLIST: MARISEA GINEVO FOR HALLEY RESOURCES; FOOD STYLIST: MARIA WASHBURN

