



# MARTIN'S GUIDE TO WINE BARGAINS

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www.VintageWineEnterprises.com-Sub. Rate \$58/yr.-Associated with Los Angeles School of Wines

VOLUME 23 , NO. 1 22nd YEAR JAN. 10, 2012

## I ADORED THIS PURE TASTING \$11.99 2010 MACON CHARDONNAY

### **2010 MACON-VINZELLES, Estate Btld. PROPRIETE (Co- Op) of Grands Cru Blancs**

As soon as I inhaled the classic pure (no Vanilla Wood) Chardonnay bouquet I thought here is a wine with all the potential of a real bargain winner, providing it has enough heft and depth and not be one of those somewhat namby-pamby, often too thin, Macon Chards. To my sheer delight, the wine passed this second requirement with flying colors with more than sufficient palate richness to make it a terrific bargain. *In fact, I am hard pressed to think of another Chardonnay selling for under \$15 (let alone this wine's bargain \$11.99 discount price) that would be better than this 2010.*

As mentioned, this medium-bodied wine has classic pure, non-wood aged Chardonnay character with its mild tastes and aromas of ripe pears, fresh peaches, green apples and pineapples and pleasing hints of creamy butterscotch. Moreover, this Macon has a crisp acid level, resulting in a well-balanced wine that gives it a compatibility with white-wine oriented dishes, be they of the simplest kind.

The wine is now very drinkable and will continue so for at least another two to three years.

**RATING: 90** (Compared to other Chard's for under \$12, it deserves a 95),

**WHERE:** Beverage Warehouse

**VELVETY, APPEALING  
2005 GRAND CRU. ST.  
EMILION AT \$29.99**

### **2005 CHATEAU LA COURONNE, App. Saint-Emilion, Grand Cru**

Though I've tasted a goodly amount of present reds from St. Emilion's Chateau La Couronne, this 2005 is the best one yet and the first I can heartily recommend. La Couronne is always soft and present, but often you want more stuffing in the wine and at least a hint of a tannic base to give it greater depth. Well, I'm pleased to say that with the excellent 2005 vintage the wines achieved the added richness I always felt it needed. True, it is still a velvety fellow, but this time there is an extra dimension of cassis and blackberry flavors and just enough tannin to give that desired extra dimension. Most enjoyable now, the wine may even improve with another couple of years of aging and keep well until the later years of this decade.

Chateau La Couronne belongs to the prestigious firm of Mahler-Besse (who once owned a part the world famous Ch. Palmer—and still do as far as I know). Chateau La Couronne covers some roughly 25 acres producing about 2,300 cases a year planted in 60% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc with the remaining 15% being Cabernet Sauvignon.

**RATING: 90/91**

**PRICE: \$29.00 \* bargain**

**WHERE:** Wally's Wine and Sprits

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**A \$44 NAPA VALLEY  
CABERNET BLEND OF SOME  
CHOICE LOTS—GIVING A  
WINE COMPARABLE TO  
MANY DOUBLE its PRICE**

## 2007 SLEEPER, NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Though I am usually on the skeptical side, when it comes to wines purchased from several different source batches and then blended and bottled under a "negoicant" or "what have you label." There are, on rare occasions a negoicant blend winner well worth your consideration, because the bottler is reputable and most likely by long friendships with certain wineries he's able to obtain high quality "juice." Such a wine is this *2007 Sleeper* selling on discount for \$40 and to me comparable to many California Napa Cab's selling in the \$70 to \$80 range.

The first hint of quality begins with the fact that the wine is from the exceptional 2007 Napa Vintage—the vintage (for example) that to me produced the best Phelps Insignia *ever made!* The color is a deep rich purple with aromas of currants and ripe berries with hints of roasted herbs and spices. On the palate, the wine exhibits classic Napa Valley Cabernet character with its tastes of dark ripe cherries, plums and an elegant long finish with hints of anise.

This is a firm structured Cabernet with a noticeable, but appealing tannic backbone and a fine acid balance that to me indicates the wine will gain with several years aging and keep well throughout the decade.

**RATING: 92 +**

**PRICE: \$44.00 \*\*\*\*bargain**

**WHERE: THE REDD COLLECTION  
8440 WARNER DR. UNIT C – CULVER  
CITY, (310) 202-733**

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**[VERY IMPRESSIVE CALIF.  
PINOT NOIR FOR \\$24.99 —  
ADORED THIS WINE!!](#)**

## 2009 FORT ROSS SEA SLOPE SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR

This is the first time I have ever tried Fort Ross Pinot Noir and one of the many thousands of times I've savored Sonoma County Pinot Noirs. And I must say that I am most impressed with the '09 Fort Ross Pinot Noir, at \$24.99 it is certainly one of the top Pinot Noirs around (from anywhere in the world) selling for under \$30 (and maybe then some). This is a do not miss to try wine for any Pinot Noir fan!

This '09 Fort Rose Sea Slopes selection is classic California Pinot except for maybe, exhibiting a darker and richer than usual color. The nose and taste of this medium to full bodied red are instantly recognizable as Pinot Noir with its aromas and flavors of ripe raspberries, currants, hints of wild-mushrooms and truffles and that very easy to detect, but so hard to describe flavor/nose

essence of this remarkable grape. Of course you would recognize it as a "new world" Pinot Noir with its intense but in this case well-balanced fruitiness.

The wine is now very enjoyable and will even gain with a year or so of bottle aging and keep well until the end of this decade.

The winery gives an excellent one-paragraph description of the origin, vinification and aging of this fine wine, which I quote in full, as follows, "The grapes for this Pinot Noir were handpicked during the cool hours of the night in 5 gallon buckets. After hand sorting, the fruit was de-stemmed then cold soaked for several days and fermented in a combination of five and 10-ton tanks. The caps were punched down one or 2 times per day, depending on the stage of the fermentation. The wines were then barreled in a combination of 20% new and 80% used French oak. Throughout the 10 months of barrel aging, the clones and different vineyard blocks were kept separate to maintain their distinct flavor profiles and structural components as blending elements."

**RATING: 91/92** (Compared to other domestic Pinot Noirs under \$30, it deserves a **95**).

**PRICE: \$24.99 \*\*bargain**

**WHERE: Wally's Wine and Spirits**

**[A MELLOW, APPEALING  
PROVENCE WHITE AT \\$10 -  
- A HALF PRICE STEAL!](#)**

## 2003 CHATEAU MIRVAL, COTES DE PROVENCE TERRE BLANCHE, Est. Btld.

Before trying this wine, I must admit that I was expecting a disappointing chap well past its prime. HOWEVER, I WAS IN ERROR. For this 9-year-old, white made 100% from the Vermentino grape and grown on ancient vineyards established in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, is still most enjoyable with not a hint of senility. Even at 9 years, it's a most charming mellow delight with enough hints of acid to say, "I'm still going strong!" The kind of wine to enjoy with grilled or sautéed seafood, as well as pork and veal and with Asian cuisine where you want emphasis on velvet mellowness as opposed to a crisp puckering quality.

Normal price is around \$20 with The REDD collection having it on special for \$10.

This 2003 Chateau Mirval is for present consumption and during the next couple of years.

Vermentino is a protean vine found the length of Italy and in the Roussillon/Languedoc areas of France where many authorities believe it to be the same as the Rolle grape of Provence. As for its ancient origin, some have proposed that it is a sub-variety of the Malvasia grape. However, with the DNA testing now available, its true

origin and family connections may soon be firmly established.

**RATING: 88/89**

**PRICE: \$10.00 \*\*\*\*bargain**

**WHERE: THE REDD COLLECTION  
(FIND ADDRESS ON PAGE ONE)**

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**APPEALING, CHARMING  
'06 RED BORDEAUX FOR  
\$19.99**

**2006 CHATEAU de BIROT, Appl  
Premieres Cotes de Bordeaux**

Looking for an appealing, charming, ready to drink and savory medium bodied red Bordeaux for around \$20, then look no forward. For such a wine is this '06 Chateau de Birot produced on the right bank Premier Cotes de Bordeaux area, from a 55 acre estate making about 5000 cases a year of an appealing red composed of 50% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Cabernet Franc.

The Chateau itself is a most alluring beautiful building set on a hillside and created in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (just before the French revolution). Since 1989, it has belonged to Eric Fournier and his wife, nee Casteja. Its 2006 is an almost opaque medium-bodied wine, with a fine substance coupled with spicy oak and lovely gentle undertones of, blackberry, cherry and dark currants. The wines matured for nearly a year in casks of which as much as 50% is new oak.

Anticipated maturity, now through 2014.

**RATING: 90/91**

**PRICE: \$19.99**

**WHERE: Wally's Wine and Spirits**

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**A MOST PLESENT CAB.-  
MERLOT BLEND FROM  
SPAIN-NORMALLY \$25 TO  
\$30 ON SPECIAL AT \$15**

**M – M – 2000 MASIA L'HERRU**

This is truly a most fascinating modest priced medium to full-bodied red wine from the Penedes region of southern Spain not to far from the city of Barcelona. The wine is estate bottled from vineyards in the township of Saint Sadurni D'Andia, which appropriately enough borders the Andina River.

This 2000 is a blend of equal parts of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon and most pleasantly combines the

velvety-berry like character of Merlot with the firmer more tannic and predominately ripe cherry quality that is such a hallmark of Cabernet Sauvignon. In generally it reminds of a firm right-bank Bordeaux wine, yet there is enough difference that if served blind I'd hard placed to place the wine beyond saying it expresses a directly appealing wood aged Cabernet blend character. The wood coming from the fact the wine did receive 18 months of barrel aging.

Normal price for this most present fellow is around \$25 to \$30 and at quite a bargain at its special Redd Collection price of \$15. Though mature, it shows no sign of getting old and should easily continue to be enjoyable another 3 or 4 years.

**RATING: 88/90**

**PRICE: \$15, \*\*\*\*bargain**

**WHERE: The Redd Collection**

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**A CHARMER OF A ITALIAN  
NEBBIOLO AT 23.95,  
FRUITY WITH DEPTH**

**2008 VIETTI NEBBIOLO PER-  
BACCO from LANGHE**

Often wines made from Nebbiolo, as Barolo and Barbaresco are tannic, full-bodied and often a bit austere (particularly when young). This Perbacco from Viette is different, being a medium to full-bodied wine whose tannins are noticeably softer. Furthermore, the wines vinified to bring our a delightful appealing fruitiness, while not doing away entirely with the lovely earthy and wild-mushroom, truffle and cassis character of the more classic Nebbiolo based wines. Being less tannic, fruitier and more rounded the wine is now quite approachable and yet may even gain in complexity for another year and continue to offer fine drinking for an additional five years.

The Perbacco Nebbiolo comes from the Piedmont Langhe area, the same appellation used by Gaja in all his expensive single vineyard Barbarescos (i.e. San Lorenzo, etc). The grapes come from various parcels whose average vine are is 35 years. Vinification or each vineyard occurs separately for as much as a month, followed by malolactic period done in both stainless steel and barrels.

The next part of the ageing, for most of the wines, takes place in barriques for 10 months. Then further aging occurs for 16 months in large Slovenian oak casks.

The wines a fine companion with roasted red meats or grilled Italian sausages as well as a delightful companion that will turn a fine meat and/or tomato baste sauced pasta as well as a top quality Pizza into a feast.

Regular price is around \$30 or so a bottle, with L.A. Wine Co. having it on special for under \$24.00.

**RATING: 90/91**

**PRICE: 23.95 \*\*\* bargain**

**WHERE: Los Angeles Wine Co.**

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**THIS IS MY NUMBER ONE  
CHOICE OF A FRENCH  
CHAMPAGNE UNDER \$70,  
AND IT GOES FOR \$44.95**

**PAUL BARA BRUT RESERVE  
CHAMPAGNE, GRAND CRU  
(100%) from BOUZY – ESTATE  
BOTTLED**

My serious admiration for the Grand Cru Champagnes of Paul Bara has been going on for many, many years, why even before I visited the winery some 30 plus years ago. This is one of the rare champagnes that are estate bottled, with all the grapes coming from the vineyards of Paul Bara (you can tell its estate bottled by the small code number on the front of the label, which begins with RM, a designation restricted to estate, bottled Champagnes).

The vineyards of Paul Bara surround the Montage de Reims town of Bouzy and area known for its superb world famous Pinot Noir plantings.

Oh, and by the way the designation Grand Cru on a bottle of Champagne, is the highest quality ranking an area in Champagne can receive.

I cannot improve on Robert Parkers champagne reviewer, when he describes sparkling gem, as, "One of the small, high quality Champagne estates, Paul Bara's current line-up includes some marvelous, precise, impeccably well-balanced Champagnes that are at the top of the qualitative pyramid. The non-vintage Brut Reserve is a reasonably good value for such a superb Champagne. Made from 90% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay, this is a classy, elegant, full-bodied Champagne with superb depth, outstanding freshness and vivaciousness, and tiny, pinpoint, uniformly-sized, long lasting bubbles. There are plenty of authoritative flavors crammed into this medium-bodied wine. Drink this structured yet flavorful Champagne over the next decade."

Though this article is about the Paul Bara non-vintage Brut Reserve Grand Cru (on special at Wally's for under \$45 (normal is around \$55 to \$60), I do want to heartily recommend the other Paul Bara Vintage and non-Vintage Champagnes at Wally's, just be sure that the designation GRAND CRU is on the various labels.

**RATING: 94+**

**PRICE: \$44.95 \*\*\* bargain**

**WHERE: Wally's Wine and Spirits**

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**MARTIN WEINER'S  
LOS ANGELES SCHOOL OF  
WINES DINNER -TASTING  
SCHEDULE**

**JANUARY-MARCH 2012**

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**PETRUS '75, CHEVAL  
BLANC '90, LAFLEUR, a  
\$1000 Mystery Wine &  
NUMEROUS GREAT  
POMEROLS (1975-2008)**

Let the New Year begin with a grand gala tasting/dinner featuring Petrus '75 (Parker 98+), Cheval Blanc '90 (P. 100), a \$1,000 mystery wine and two great Lafleurs. Plus numerous incomparable great Pomerols including 7 La Conseillantes, 4 L'Evangiles & 4 Vieux Cartans and more. Over \$11,000 in fabulous wines.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2012**

**\$498.00 including dinner and  
cheese course**

(Tasting filled, inquire about our waiting list)

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**MAGNIFICENT RHONE  
MASTERPIECES-Numerous  
Guigal La-La's, Chapoutiers  
and incomparable Chateau-  
neuf-du-Papes (1978-2006)**

This tasting features some of the greatest Rhone wines of the last 25 plus years, including many Parker 99 and 100 rated wines. Including La Turques, Moulines & Landonnes from 1988 & 1989 etc. Great Hermitages of Chapoutier, Guigals, etc. And incomparable Chateauneuf for La Janasse (P.99), Mordoree Reine '01 (P. 100) Pegeaum Ussegilo '03

(P.98+) and many more "dream" wines. Many served in large Magnum Bottles

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2012

\$498.00 including dinner and  
cheese course

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HEART OF BURGUNDY'S  
COTE D'NUIT with  
MUSIGNYS, GRANDS  
ECHEZEAUX, BONNES-  
MARES OF DeVogue, D.R.C.,  
Leroy etc. (1985-2009)

A cornucopia of some of the greatest Musignys of de Vogue, including the 2005 that Burghound gave his ultimate 99 rating! Plus numerous other de Vogue masterpieces, and Echezeaux of D.R.C. and other top producer's Bonnes-Mares, etc. Well over \$12,000 in some of Burgundies greatest wines!

FRIDAY, MARCH 23, 2012

\$535.00 including dinner &  
cheese course

(Ask of now there are about 2 or 3 openings)

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For Complete Listing of wines served and course description, and other details visit our web site at

[www.VintageWineEnterprises.com](http://www.VintageWineEnterprises.com)

**For other information or to enroll in any of these events please contact us at:**

[MWINE@MSN.COM](mailto:MWINE@MSN.COM) or

Phone (310) 474-7773