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9 Napa Reds that Won't Scare Your Wallet

Napa may have a pricy reputation but it is possible to find well-made values.

BY VIRGINIE BOONE

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Napa has a reputation for being on the expensive side when it comes to wine, especially its reds. But that doesn't mean it's not possible to find something worth drinking under \$30.

How do the winemakers do it? They can cut costs by using less oak (or spending less time in oak), using lots intended for higher-end vineyard designates that taste more approachable now, or just

deciding to offer something affordable for casual sipping. Here are bottles worth seeking out that won't scare your wallet.

B Side 2013 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$28

From Don Sebastiani & Sons in Sonoma County, this is kind of a crazy deal, over-delivering quality for the price. It's made from mostly Cabernet Sauvignon, with handfuls of Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc blended in to good effect. The wine combines into rich, concentrated layers of chocolate and graham cracker, dappled in vanilla and jam. Thick tannins require a swirl of the glass, but this is a drinkable, likable red wine well worth stocking up for winter.

Eagle Glen 2013 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$22

Hailing from multiple vineyards, this wine works on many levels, offering a mix of hot mulled cider spices, cinnamon, clove and pine forest that gives it surprising depth. On the palate, plum, dark cherry and more clove give in to a powerful, leathery finish, a good choice for hearty meat dishes and wintertime dishes like risotto.

Cameron Hughes 2012 Lot 555 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$29

From an estate in Rutherford that can't be named, as per the usual Cameron Hughes protocol, this balanced Cab offers succulent plum, black olive, raspberry and cinnamon, melding the myriad sides of its personality well. Integrated oak and a medium-weight body allow the wine to breathe and expand on the palate, finishing in dust.

Black Stallion 2012 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$30

From the heart of southern Napa, Black Stallion makes a range of wines, many of them much more expensive. This, however, is a deal. It's an attractively priced, concentrated wine offering bright, soft layers of dark cherry and cassis, with a slight taste of dark chocolate. Providing everything one needs in a big red wine, it ends powerfully in dusty tannins.

Oberon 2013 Napa County Cabernet Sauvignon, \$25

From Michael Mondavi Family Estate, this affordable Cabernet is concentrated in red berry and savory leather, a nod to the small amounts of Syrah and Petite Sirah included in the blend. French oak provides a hint of vanilla and cardamom, while the medium-bodied, approachable end languishes in coffee.

Napa Cellars 2012 Classic Collection Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$24

Bold, juicy blackberry and cherry combine for an elegant expression of Cabernet in this soft, finessed wine, laced in classic notes of cedar. The wine finishes in a complex burst of black licorice and is a food-friendly choice.

Hess Collection 2012 Allomi Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$30

This blend from the fine folks at Hess consists of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petite Sirah and 2% Petit Verdot and works on many levels. Floral lavender and violet open the wine before a light, rounded touch of blackberry and leather hit the palate, followed by earthy cola spice. Well-priced and easy to enjoy, it puts good winemaking on display.

Slingshot 2013 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$23

From a brother-sister team based in Napa devoted to reasonably priced wines, this Cab is still a baby, pudgy and withdrawn. Yet, it still imparts enough herbal and black cherry to be inviting and promising for the future, given a swirl or two. It retains hefty tannins expected in a youthful wine, but is already integrated in terms of oak. Let it open for the full effect.

Robert Mondavi 2012 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$28

This kindly, value-driven wine from this legendary winery has a touch of spearmint and bay leaf on the nose, remaining savory and herbal on the palate. A bit of heft builds around black cherry and raspberry, ending seamlessly with only the faintest taste of toasted oak.

For more value-driven bottles, check out our guide to [30 Bordeaux under \\$30](#), and of course, our [Top 100 Best Buys](#)!

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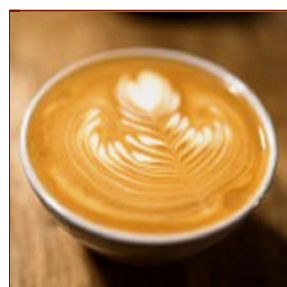
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