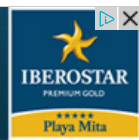




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The Best 20 Wines Under \$20 — That Taste Way More Expensive!

Originally posted 12/16/2013 12:02PM

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Ever been in this scenario? You're rushing to yet another holiday party when you remember you wanted to bring wine. You stop at the liquor store, flustered and unprepared, and get talked into buying a pricey bottle because, well, who wants to cheap out on the hostess gift?

We knew there had to be a better way, so we got help from two vino pros: *Wine Enthusiast* magazine's executive editor Susan Kostrzewa and tasting director Lauren Buzzeo. They assured us that there are plenty of sophisticated, delicious choices that won't blow your holiday budget.

Their biggest shopping tip? As you're eyeing the store shelves, think internationally. Kostrzewa loves to serve what she calls "a diverse global smattering of wines" at parties to encourage great conversation. "My guests and I often share stories about the vacations we've taken in those regions while we're drinking the wine, and today you can find amazing wines from diverse categories at reasonable prices," she tells PEOPLE.

If you signed up to bring sparkling wine, don't grab a traditional Champagne unless you want to drop major cash. Instead, Buzzeo suggests choosing a more wallet-friendly bubbly like Crémant d'Alsace, Crémant de Loire, or Spanish Cava. "Everyone loves a good glass of sparkling wine around the holidays, but Champagne can often be too pricey for entertaining or the gift-giver on a budget. There are so many wonderful regions that produce affordable and delicious sparkling wines, including within France," she says.

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RED:

Qupé Central Coast Syrah, 2011 (California)
 Ruta 22 Malbec, 2011 (Argentina)
 Cantine Colosi Nero d'Avola IGT, 2012 (Sicily)
 Château Le Vin Matin Cru Red Bordeaux Blend, 2005 (France)
 Château des Landes Lussac-Saint-Emilion, 2010 (France)
 Gerard Bertrand's Grand Terroir Tautavel, 2007 (France)
 Painted Wolf Guillermo Pinotage, 2010 (South Africa)
 Robertson Phanto Ridge Pinotage, 2010 (South Africa)

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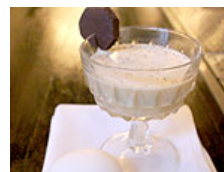
Alpha Estate Axia Malagouzia, 2012 (Greece)
 Penya Viognier, 2012 (France)
 Château Timberlay Blanc, 2012 (France)
 Man Vintners Chenin Blanc 2011 and Man Vintners Cuvée V 2012 (these inexpensive South African wines are fun to taste together)

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JCB No. 21 Brut Crémant de Bourgogne (France)

- Michelle NV Brut Rosé (Washington State)
- Segura Viudas NV Brut Reserva Cava (Spain)
- Freixenet Sparkling Cordon Negro Brut Cava (Spain)
- René Sparr Crémant d'Alsace (France)
- Lucien Albrecht Crémant d'Alsace (France)
- Château Moncontour Crémant de Loire (France)

—Lexi Dwyer

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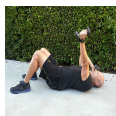
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