

The Wine Guys

Gems for the cash-strapped

BY TOM MARQUARDT AND PATRICK DARR

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In light of the economic slowdown, we have dug up some inexpensive gems for those, like us, who are watching our cash outflows. In the global arena, and with a worldwide glut of wine, there is no dearth of well-made wines.

We recently tasted several wines from around the world that were touted as bargains and discounted in our market. Here are several we can recommend:

- Ruffino Chianti 2008 (\$8-\$11). We remember this wine from our college days when many inexpensive Italian restaurants offered it in a straw-covered bottle. The wine offers a sweet dried-cherry and berry nose, with classic chianti cherry flavors and a bit of leather. Good acidity and a pretty red, purple color.
- Red Guitar Tempranillo Garnacha Navarra Spain 2007 (\$11). The blend is 55 percent tempranillo and 45 percent garnacha (grenache). It exhibits a very nice fruity nose with a hint of cinnamon. The garnacha really comes through by offering a wonderful mouth-filling cherry, berry expression; the tempranillo offers backbone.
- Prado Rey Birlocho 2008 (\$10). A blend of viura and verdejo grapes, the Birlocho has incredible aromatics, good acidity and bright citrus flavors. It could be our “go-to” party wine this summer.
- Prado Rey Verdejo 2008 (\$11). Grapefruit and pineapple notes with a nice mineral thread. Very refreshing and round in the mouth.
- Bodega Luigi Bosca Finca La Linda 2008 (\$11). This was the hands-down winner in a tasting of several Argentinian malbecs. Bright cherry notes with a dash of cloves and fine tannins.
- Hogue Columbia Valley Red Table Wine 2007 (\$10). Loads of juicy raspberry and cherry flavors, soft mouthfeel and lots of spice. It’s a blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, syrah and malbec. Great value.
- Bivio Pinot Grigio delle Venezie 2008 (\$12). Crisp pear and apricot flavors with good acidity. A nice wine for the spring.
- Ramat Tempranillo 2006 (\$10). From the Costers del Segre region of Spain, this simple wine has good berry fruit and a touch of vanillin oak.
- Mouton Cadet Rouge Bordeaux 2007 (\$7-10). A very simple, medium-bodied blend of 65 percent merlot, 20 percent cabernet sauvignon and 15 percent cabernet franc. Nice classic Bordeaux flavors of cassis and cherry with a bit of leather thrown in.

Foppiano Vineyards

Sometimes well-established wineries with incredible history and reputation need a fresh approach. Maybe that’s the case with Foppiano Vineyards, now more than 100 years old and led by a new team of young and energetic people who want the historic property to become known for more than just its iconic petite sirah.

We recently met up with Natalie West, Foppiano’s very young wine-maker, and Todd Arterburn, its engaging president. The team is on the road trying to elevate Foppiano’s image by concentrating

exclusively on its estate wines. A new and attractive bottle label is symbolic of its push for a more prestigious image. It also is looking to open a new winemaking facility.

Raised in Dry Creek Valley on zinfandel property, West did stints at Ferrari-Carano, J Vineyards and Clos la Chance before coming to Foppiano a few years ago. The 2008 wines are all hers.

- Foppiano Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc 2009 (\$18). Grapefruit and melon flavors with round texture and good acidity. Very nice complexity.
- Foppiano Vineyards Pinot Noir 2008 (\$24). Medium body, simple cherry flavors with balanced acidity and generous fruit.
- Foppiano Vineyards Petite Sirah 2008 (\$20). The 2008 has the deep color, brawny tannins and rich dark berry and chocolate flavors of a classic petite sirah.

Note: Some of the wines recommended in our column may have been provided for review by their producers.

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