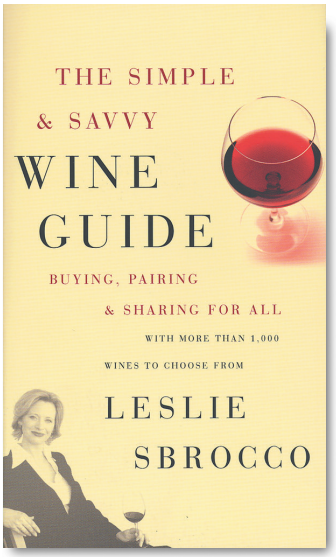

Twice-The-Price Wines

BARGAIN BOTTLES THAT OVERDELIVER IN QUALITY

When you sample at least a thousand bargain wines each year as I do, you develop an appreciation for producers that over deliver. The following wines are all priced under $15 though taste better than many bottles costing twice the price. What sets them apart is not only a high-quaffability quotient, but the fact that they showcase a unique character and reflect their origins.

Cameron Hughes

Pinot Noir "Lot Series" Monterey County, California
Medium-bodied, light tannins, fresh, spicy.
Hughes, a negociant, blends surplus juice into complex wine.
$10-13 www.chwine.com

MYTH BUSTER

More Expensive Wine Is Always Better

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Catch me laughing out loud here. What is "better"? Better with pizza or for putting in the wine cellar? It all depends upon your perspective and your pocketbook. While it is true that some of the world's most-lauded wines are extremely expensive, that doesn't make them better in every situation. Bottle price is related to a combination of overhead costs such as vineyard land and cellar equipment, as well as supply and demand. Simply because the price tag is higher doesn't mean one wine is always better than another. Case in point: When I judge wine competitions, inexpensive wines often take the highest medals, beating out pricier bottles. Why? They tend to be softer, more approachable, and show well in their youth.