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LIQUID CULTURE



Summer's
Best Iced
Cocktails

Shaved Ice
Across
America

Cool,
Refreshing
Lagers

An Imbiber's
Guide to
San Diego

CAHORS AND GASCONY

The southwestern portion of France, with the Atlantic to its west and Spain to its south, offers two great value AC spots that you'll want to program into your wine radar—Gascony and Cahors. Gascony is mostly on the map for its fictional swashbuckling D'Artagnan from *Three Musketeers* fame, and the Grand Poobah of after-dinner brandy sipping, Armagnac. But it's home to fantastically sippable whites with miles of bang-for-the-buck personality made from the grapes better known as a brandy base (Ugni Blanc and Colombard), as well as refreshing, steel-fermented Gros Manseng, Petit Manseng, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay—much of which lingers around the \$10 range. On the red side of things, look for the inky, Tannat-based wines of Gascony's Madiran, which are lively, rich and rustic. Also watch for reds from nearby Cahors, where the grape Malbec reigns supreme. And while you might associate this varietal with the plush, fruit-forward, sometimes big-boned wines of Argentina, check out the Malbs from here for slightly more restrained and lean versions of this popular red.

GOOD BETS

**2010 Domaine du Tariquet Classic Ugni Blanc/
Colombard Cotes de Gascogne, \$10**

This blend of Ugni Blanc and Colombard is heady with smells of lime and grapefruit zest, Granny Smith apples and Lily of the Valley, but flavor-wise it's bright and almost spritzy, with great acidity, lots of mineral and grapefruit notes, and a slightly saline finish that makes the mouth water. It's perfect with oysters.