

**CARROLL COUNTY TIMES**

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## *10 wines for \$15 or less that are guest-worthy*

**TOM MARQUARDT  
AND PATRICK DARR***Wine, Etc.*

It's hard nowadays to find a decent wine under \$15. Sure, you can find some swill that comes in a bottle the size of a fish tank, but would you serve it to guests – besides the in-laws?

Wine costs have steadily risen over the years and that bottle of zinfandel we liked so much 10 years ago is no longer \$8 a bottle. Even Two Buck Chuck is no longer \$2.

Consumers concerned about cost have been forced into buying wines of lower standard, which may still give them the same pleasure as more expensive wines. But, if you would rather drink less but drink better, there are more choices in the \$15 category. And, it gets remarkably better at \$20. Wines at this price develop more complexity from oak barrels and use fruit from better sources.

Reasonably priced wine comes in most flavors and from most regions with the exception of pinot noir – a delicious wine with stratospheric prices. Don't waste your time looking for a \$15 Bordeaux either.

But Italy, Spain, Australia, California and obscure regions like Romania and Croatia are producing inexpensive wines. Most of these producers don't own vineyards or even wineries, but instead buy grapes and have them vinified at a custom-crushing facility. Instead of relying on one vineyard, these producers blend grapes from a number of broad regions. It is not unusual to find "California" on the label as the source of the grapes.

Here are a few modestly priced wines we recently found.

■ **Domaine Du Tariquet Rosé De Presse Cotes De Gascogne 2014** (\$13). This is a terrific rosé. Perfectly balanced, beautiful medium pink color, with a cherry nose and flavors and some interesting spice notes. Wonderful fruit expression.