



BUYINGGUIDE

SPOILED FOR CHOICE

Look to southern France and Portugal for Best Buys.

Jacy Topps, assistant print editor, reviews French wines from Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence and Vin de France. Roger Voss, writer at large, reviews the wines of Portugal and the French regions of Bordeaux, Champagne, Southwest France and other France.

Jacy Topps: Lower-priced wines can sometimes be polarizing in the industry. And while there are several factors that can determine the price of a bottle, the price doesn't necessarily have to dictate the quality and complexity of the wine. There's absolutely nothing wrong with expensive cellar-worthy fine wine. However, a delicious bottle of wine doesn't have to break your budget. We're lucky our regions offer a great selection of both high-end and affordable bottles.

Roger Voss: I agree. In the regions I review, I discover many great wines that are certainly of good value. When I am tasting, I look for wines that I would enjoy drinking. I admire great wines (and I get the chance to taste the greatest from two different countries), but what I also really appreciate are the wines I could buy today and drink tonight. These are the ones that often end up as Best Buys in our Buying Guide.

JT: What affordable wines from your regions are you excited about this year?

RV: Contrary to popular belief, most Bordeaux is not expensive. Great value comes from the Bordeaux Supérieur appellation. These red wines are a step up from basic Bordeaux. They are a product of the huge strides that have been made in winemaking and vineyard management. I rated Château Pey la Tour, produced by the large negociant Dourthe, at 90 points.



Jacy Topps



Roger Voss

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In Portugal, I am spoiled for choice. The Alentejo in the south is a good source for some delicious wines. Casa Relvas Vinha da Mina, a single-vineyard wine, made from the Touriga Franca grape, is excellent. The Douro, the premier vineyard area of the country, also makes fine values, particularly in white wines, for example the Quinta da Rede Reserva.

RV: What affordable wines from your regions are you excited about this year?

JT: French wine has been undergoing a transformation over the last few decades. Less regulated designations like Vin de France and Pays d'Oc have given way to dynamic wines at lower price points and are leading the production of biodynamic and organic wines in the south of France. I'm really enjoying the Chardonnay from **Barton & Guestier** Bistrot and Côté Mas, a white blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Vermentino from Paul Mas. These white wines are excellent examples of the delicious, easy-drinking and affordable offerings from the regions.

RV: It's obvious that it's not necessary to spend big sums to get drinking satisfaction this autumn and winter. One of my greatest satisfactions as a reviewer is searching out these bargains.