

## New World Reds That Aren't Cabernet Sauvignon

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor  
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### Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

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or those of you who've been practicing "dry January," welcome back to the world of wine. We've missed you, and we're ready to resume trying new bottles and grapes.

Speaking of trying something new, it's true that when you visit most wine shops, you'll see a lot of the same styles and types of wines. For instance, Cabernet Sauvignon grapes make some of the most popular red wines, and if you pay attention, you'll see rows and rows of Cabernet at almost every store. In the New World, which means those wine-producing regions outside of Europe, we especially see a lot of this grape variety. Think about how often you hear the phrase "Napa Cab." There's nothing wrong with this grape, but there are so many other bottles and blends to try when it comes to reds.

In the spirit of exploration, let's think beyond Cabernet, and try one of these bottles of economical New World reds.

Venture north from Napa to Washington State, where the **2017 Velvet Devil Merlot** is made. I

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know that Merlot has had a bad reputation ever since the movie

*Sideways*

, but it's time you gave it another try. This bottle is silky smooth with grippy tannins and spice on the finish. Juicy, jammy, and full bodied, the Velvet Devil lives up to its name. Cabernet lovers will appreciate the darker flavors, and I hope this bottle will make you think, "The devil with avoiding Merlot."

Another Washington wine to look out for is the **2017 Upper Left Syrah**. Washington State is known for boldness when it comes to red wines, and this bottle will not leave you wondering why. Fruity but with that signature Syrah pepper, Upper Left is both supple and approachable. Strawberry and blackberry come together to add intense flavors, but overall, you've got a balanced bottle.

One of the shockers of the bunch is the **2018 Conscious Pinot Noir** from the Willamette Valley in Oregon, priced at under \$12. This is a steal of a wine. Hardly ever do you find an Oregon Pinot priced this low, and it's an excellent value wine that shows regional varietal character just like its more expensive cousins. Bright red cherry syrup, vanilla, and blackberry jam aromas join tart cherry flavors in the mouth. Surprisingly perfect acidity makes this a great food-pairing Pinot.

I wasn't going to leave the U.S. without mentioning a California alternative, but you'll have to head down the Central Coast to Paso Robles for this one. Peachy Canyon is a staple winery in that area, and its **2016 Peachy Canyon "Incredible Red" Zinfandel** is a classic example of this varietal. Think red berry pie filling with a hint of ultra-ripe blueberries. No stickiness to the tannins, just a gooey smooth, mouthful of berries type of wine. Zinfandels are usually easy-drinking wines, and this one is perfect to enjoy on its own.

It's not hard to find non-Cabernet reds at a value coming out of South America, and the **2017 Amalaya Malbec**

is a great example of that. Amalaya, meaning "hope for a miracle" in Argentina's indigenous languages, is a wine made from grapes grown in the highest-altitude vineyards of Salta. The high altitude contributes to concentrated fruit with bold flavors. This Malbec is actually a blend with ten percent Tannat and five percent Petit Verdot. It's a dense and brooding wine, thanks to the depth of the contributing grapes. Inkier than your average Malbec, Amalaya is bold but soft.

Across the Andes in Chile, the **2018 Anakena Carménère** out of the Central Valley is one big

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pepper bomb on the nose, with supporting aromas of cherry and strawberry. A luscious wine, Carménère is a perfect accompaniment to any meat prepared with a spice pack. Think peppery pork chops and Anakena Carménère. Overall, this is great option for under \$10.

The best for last? A grape that's a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, Pinotage is something of a South African specialty. The **2018 Spier Pinotage** is the perfect wine to include with grilled burgers topped with earthy mushrooms. Smokey on the finish, with some white pepper and lingering cinnamon spice, along with a mixed bag of berries and plum flavors. Noticeable tannins but easy drinking, this is a New World red wine to revisit again and again.

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