



DRINKS



12 WINES @ \$12 AND UNDER

Cheap and cheerful

Yes, you can drink well on a shoestring budget. We tasted dozens of wines to bring you the 12 best deals.

IT'S PRETTY easy to find yourself a decent drink when the wallet's full.

No problem. I'll take that big Barossan shiraz, thanks – a hundred bucks. Here you go. Keep the change.

But can you get a decent drink when the pay's running thin? Say for \$10-\$12?

We set out to prove you can, and while we might not be in 100 Parker points territory with the cult wine-makers turning heads in the U.S., we found you can pour a good drop for a tenth of the price of many of the most fancied Australian tipples.

Even casks are on the improve, says wine judge and author Peter Forrester, who's tasted thousands of cheapies in his quest to write an annual bargain wine guide, the latest *Quaff 2008 – The Best Wines in Australia Under \$15* (Hardie Grant).

A couple of things he has learned over the years, he says, are to find yourself a trusted liquor retailer and also a regularly published reviewer whose taste in wines satisfies yours. They try wines continually, so let



TONY LOVE

them guide you to the best, no matter what your budget.

When it comes to the cheapies, look also for companies on the rise, Forrester says. He suggests labels such as Angove's, De Bortoli and Yalumba as names to trust in the bargain corner.

Our challenge delivers a dozen wines from bigger companies as well as family outfits. Each has good varietal character and punches well above its weight when it comes to getting good value.



THE WHITES

1 Leasingham 2007
Circa 1895 Riesling
90 points 12.5%
\$10

It has zest and brown-lime cordial notes. It has some of the acidity that has built Clare's name in this variety, it's not overpowering and finishes with a faint friendly note of sweetness.

2 Reilly's 2007 Barking
Mad Sauvignon Blanc
89 points 12%
\$10.99

Adelaide Hills fruit gives this smart little doozey quite some intensity, with the grassy and gooseberry end of the variety's flavour spectrum what the spritely wine is all about – no fuss, no frills, savvy and straight.

3 Yalumba Y-Series 2007 Pinot Grigio
87 points 15%
\$11.95

Soft rose garden fragrances and white apple blossom introduce this delicate wine with enough textural line to hold up at the table and enough freshness in the mouth for simple summer afternoon pleasure.

4 Heartland 2007 Stickleback
89 points 12.5%
\$12

A clever blend by Ben Glaetzer of verdelho, semillon and chardonnay that follows a fresh pear line of flavour with good bodyweight and clean, crisp finish. More-ish.

5 Lindemans 2006 Bin 65
89 points 15.5%
\$10

Unmistakable chardonnay melons and ripe peaches with creamy oak layers and a pretty smart approach from this consistent cheapie that's looking really good this year with lovely rounded palate weight and a soft finish.

6 McWilliam's 2006 Hanwood Estate
Chardonnay
89 points 15%
\$10

Distinctive honey and mint aromas add to the stone fruit salad of this bargain. It has poise and restraint on the palate before a fresher finish than expected, making an all-round good summer lunch companion. Life is peachy.

THE REDS

7 Beelgara 2006 Shiraz Rose
87 points 15%
\$8

The lightest of pink tones in the European style with little skin contact yet enough spice in the wine to add some fascination to sweet watermelon and strawberry flavours – a real summer sweetheart.

8 d'Arenberg 2005 The Stump Jump
90 points 14.5%
\$12

From old grenache, shiraz and mourvedre vines d'Arenberg's experience with grenache has the ripeness spot-on, with lovely crimson fruits, hints of herbs, a little spice and many pleasures. A hot ticket at a great price.

9 Reilly's 2004 Barking Mad Cabernet
Sauvignon
90 points 14.2%
\$10-\$12

Good varietal presence to start with – ripe black berries and Ribena-like lifts, proper cabernet tannins in the mouth with a decent layer of darker berry fruits on the palate. This winery is delivering good wine and smart prices.

10 Fox Creek 2005 Shadow's Run
Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon
89 points 14%
\$12

Ripe summer plums and blackberries give this a real warmth, with a cleverly structured foundation underneath, a bare notice of oak, good carriage through the mouth and rich meaty flavours that suit the summer barbecue season.

11 Lindemans 2006 Bin 50 Shiraz
91 points 15.5%
\$10

It might be a big corporate wine, but it has excellent cool plum fruit and mouthfeel, with a little spice and deft medium weight to deliver easy drinking as well as solid flavour and length for a very reasonable price.

12 Haselgrove 2005 Sovereign Series
Shiraz
92 points 14%
\$10

Lifted aromatics and ripe berry fruit give this shiraz a great head start – the grapes are ripe and delicious, with a touch of oak adding to a nutty, toasty character in the mid-palate and some complexity in the final dance. Very smart