

8 Great California Finds Under \$20

New reviews of Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and more from Sonoma, Paso Robles and Santa Barbara



Quivira specializes in Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel and Rhône varieties in Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley. (Courtesy of Quivira)

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Nov 5, 2018

Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

Everyone loves a good deal, especially when it comes to wine. Here are eight budget-friendly California bottlings from recent tastings that won't disappoint no matter the occasion.

Sauvignon Blanc is often a great pick for bargain-buying, as many clock in under \$20 and are perfect crowd-pleasers. We have two different styles here: Quivira's herbal, floral white, with a refreshing citrus frame, and Kunde's ripe and juicy version, brimming with exotic fruit.

Quality Pinot Noirs and Cabernet Sauvignons, on the other hand, are hard to find at rock-bottom prices. Castle Rock has made a name for itself as a reliable brand that overdelivers on quality for the price. If you're hosting a crowd for Thanksgiving, the fleshy Pinot Noir California Cuvée is a great affordable option to keep everyone's glass full throughout the night. And for Cabernet lovers, Sean Minor's juicy, energetic style is tough to beat at just \$16.

QUIVIRA Sauvignon Blanc Dry Creek Valley 2017 Score: 91 / \$18

Offers distinctive herbal and floral notes, with chamomile and lemon grass accents up front. Crisp and vibrant Key lime, lemon and grapefruit flavors are in harmony on the light, refreshing frame, showing plenty of intensity. Drink now. 4,010 cases made.—*MaryAnn Worobiec*

THE FEDERALIST Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2016 Score: 89 / \$18

Bold cherry, basil and cracked pepper aromas open to tightly wound, slightly rustic flavors. Best after 2019. 5,000 cases made.—*Tim Fish*

KENWOOD Merlot Sonoma County 2015 Score: 89 / \$16

Broad and finely textured, with forward flavors of raspberry, dried green elements and hints of licorice. Supple finish. Drink now through 2021. 26,000 cases made.—*Kim Marcus*

KUNDE ESTATE Sauvignon Blanc Sonoma Valley Magnolia Lane 2017 Score: 89 / \$17

The orange sherbet, melon and pineapple flavors are focused, ripe and juicy, with spice and dried floral notes on the supple finish. Drink now. 8,000 cases made.—*M.W.*

KIRKLAND SIGNATURE Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2017 Score: 88 / \$13

Offers a rich, floral aroma, with notes of savory spice to the fresh and crunchy red fruit flavors. Beef bouillon details show on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 23,686 cases made.—*K.M.*

SEAN MINOR Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles 4B 2017 Score: 88 / \$16

Juicy, brimming with blackberry and raspberry confiture flavors, liberally lined with melted licorice and warm fruitcake notes. The finish is coated with ganache accents. An obvious style, but shows energy and will win some fans. Drink now through 2021. 10,000 cases made.—*James Molesworth*

CASTLE ROCK Pinot Noir California Cuvée 2017 Score: 87 / \$11

Fleshy, with dark currant and cherry flavors backed by firm tannins and acidity. Cocoa powder notes show on the finish. Drink now. 57,790 cases made.—*K.M.*

LUCAS & LEWELLEN Chardonnay Santa Barbara County 2017 Score: 87 / \$17

A blowy and creamy style, with ripe white fruit and spice flavors. Dried savory hints show on the finish. Drink now. 1,507 cases made.—*K.M.*