

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Specialty stores stock good wine values from around the world

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The frenzy surrounding gyrating financial markets calls to mind one of wine's immutable laws. Drinking consistently well for less always brings the best returns over the long haul.

With the exploding, world-wide supply of modest, but well-made gems, tremendous wine values abound, notwithstanding the American dollar's relative weakness. And by complete, happy coincidence, Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board specialty-store shelves and aisles currently overflow with terrific buys from around the globe.

So, stay the course as financial markets chart their own course, and pause to enjoy a healthy dose of joie de vivre by trying the following without breaking the bank:

**2006 Quinto de Casal Branco, Vinho Regional Ribatejano, Portugal** (Specialty 26864, \$6.99): Massive reinvestment in modernizing Portugal's winemaking capacity changed the entire industry mostly for the better. Producers now capture and interpret the authentic essence of indigenous grape varieties that previously did not travel well.

In this case, Fernão Pires grapes from 25-year-old vines planted in sandy, well drained soils are fermented in temperature-controlled, stainless-steel tanks to preserve this white wine's fruity freshness. Aromas of pears with smoky almond notes open to crisp citrus, apple and pear flavors with crisp acidity balancing a clean, dry, yet fruity finish. Portuguese pub-goers enjoy sipping the wine well chilled as an aperitif with salty snacks. **Recommended.**

**2007 Sitios de Bodega, Conclass, Rueda, Spain** (Specialty 26889, \$12.99): This nifty little white presents a perfect antidote for sagging spirits. The arresting nose offers grapefruit and quince aromas with pleasing floral notes. Crisp grapefruit, ripe melon and quince flavors lead to refreshing mineral notes and lovely acidity through a dry, well-balanced finish.

Made primarily from traditional varieties Verdejo (80 percent) and Viura (10 percent) with a splash of Sauvignon Blanc (10 percent), Spaniards adore this style as a classic complement to all manner of tasty tapas incorporating morsels of tuna, cod and olives. Highly **Recommended.**

**2005 Fra Guerau, Montsant, Spain** (Specialty 26637, \$8.99): This classic Mediterranean red blend from Barcelona in Spain's Catalonia region incorporates no fewer than seven grape varieties: syrah (23 percent), Garnacha (19 percent), merlot (17 percent), Cariñena (16 percent), cabernet sauvignon (15 percent), tempranillo (7 percent) and monastrell (3 percent). Relatively high-altitude vineyards and moderating maritime breezes enable the grapes to ripen evenly and slowly while balancing freshness and flavor.

Aromas of black cherries with smoky, earthy notes and black pepper hints open to plum and chocolate spice flavors with fresh mineral notes and smoky hints. Soft tannins carry through the lively, fruity finish. Try it as an aperitif with plates of olives and hard, aged cheeses. Or pair it with grilled lamb. **Highly recommended.**

**2006 G 4 Finca Monte Carrascal, Granacha, Cariñena, Spain** (Specialty 10431, \$9.99): In the Cariñena subregion of northern Spain's Aragón province, the Garnacha grapes grow on high plateaus in intensely sunny days and chilly night time temperatures. They ripen fully while retaining uplifting acidity.

This wine's light ruby color offers intense, fruity black cherry and strawberry aromas with black pepper notes. Fruity, ripe plum and cherry flavors lead to smooth tannins and a soft, fruity, well-balanced finish. Try it with burgers or barbeque. **Highly recommended.**

**2006 Cabriz, Dão, Portugal** (Specialty 29750, \$9.99): The region takes its name from the river running through northern Portugal in a rugged, hot and dry terrain perfect for maturing red-skinned grapes. This classic red blend of Alfochiero, Tinto-Roriz and Touriga-Nacional offers dark-purple color with black currant and smoky oak aromas with earthy notes. Plum and black-currant flavors with oak notes carry through solid tannins and smooth fruity finish. Try it with grilled meats. **Recommended.**

**2005 Renzo Masi, Chianti Rufina Riserva, Italy** (Specialty 23114, \$11.99): Chianti's Rufina sub-region just southeast of Florence offers rugged soils and ideal temperature variations enabling grapes to ripen beautifully. This wine has a classic blend of Sangiovese (93 percent), Canaiolo (5 percent) and Colorino (2 percent) with lovely cherry and smoky almond aromas with light herbal notes. Lively cherry and light oak flavors meld with elegant tannins and a dry, but fruity finish. Try it with aged cheeses or pasta with a light red sauce and basil. **Recommended.**

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