

Top drops for under \$20

Wine Name	Price
2011 Ad Hoc 'Wallflower' Riesling	\$18
2011 Mar Mick Riesling	\$15
2011 Peter Lehmann Classic Bicsling	\$18
2011 Houghton White Classic	\$13.95
2011 Amadio Sauvignon Blanc	\$20
2011 Michelangelo Sauvignon Blanc	\$17
2011 Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc	\$19.95
2011 Mike Press Sauvignon Blanc	\$12
2011 Fifth Leg Semillon Sauvignon Blanc	\$17.95
2010 Capel Vale 'Benny' Chardonnay	\$17.95

SPENDING WINE

Top drops for under \$20

Peter Forrestal finds that while winemakers are having a rough time, drinkers have a barrel of reasons to be cheerful

The wine industry is doing it tough - oversupply, shrinking overseas markets with a strong Australian dollar and the two-speed economy. Consumers are being cautious. The best producers survive, but they have to work harder than ever.

The 2011 vintage has been tricky thanks to wetter than usual weather in the lead-up to harvest, though Western Australia and the Hunter Valley had excellent vintages.

Still, many outstanding wines were made - such as Yarra Valley chardonnay, Clare Valley riesling and Adelaide Hills sauvignon blanc.

Bargains abound, whether at the cellar door, online or through retail outlets. Supermarket chains continue to fight for market share. But don't forget: a bargain is only a bargain if the quality is there.

For the past decade, it has been easy to find good quality wines with a recommended retail price of less than \$15 a bottle. It has certainly become more difficult (but not impossible) to find quality below \$10 and, I suspect, it's harder to source good quaffing wines under \$15. It can be done, as a glance at our recommendations shows: 75% of these wines sell for \$15 or less. Clever buying strategies may be needed: purchasing in dozen lots, waiting for 30% off sales; looking for quality wines on special; befriending your local liquor merchant

Ten best-value whites

2011 AD HOC "WALLFLOWER" RIESLING \$18

Here is a well-priced riesling from winemaker Larry Cherubino and the Great Southern. There's fresh lemon/ lime citrus aromas, intense lemon pith and lime juice flavours that are pure and zesty, before a long, dry zingy finish. Crisp and crunchy.

2011 MAR MICK RIESLING \$15

Tim Adams celebrates his mentor, the legendary Mick Knappstein, and his winofal purchase of a raft of Accolade vineyards in Clare and their Leasingham cellar door with this impressive budget-priced range. The riesling is exceptional value: fresh, clean and vibrant with intense lime juice flavours and zesty, stately minerality to finish.

2011 PETER LEHMANN CLASSIC BICSLING \$18

Its consistency is reinforced by the 2011 picking up a trophy at the Adelaide Show as best white wine under \$20. This is sourced from mature vineyards in the Barossa and Eden valleys. It has gentle floral and lemon blossom aromatics, lemon butter flavours, and a long, pleasant finish with a touch of sweetness.

2011 HOUGHTON WHITE CLASSIC \$13.95

Houghton celebrates its 175th anniversary and the 74th continuous vintage of its budget-priced whites. Its composition has been ever changing but it's now a blend of chenin blanc, chardonnay, verdelho, semillon, muscadelle and riesling sourced mainly from two warm areas - the Swan and Cangu. It has beguiling tropical notes, intense guava, mango flavours with some passionfruit notes on a long, dry finish.

2011 AMADIO SAUVIGNON BLANC \$20

This Adelaide Hills-based label hits the spot in the 2011 vintage with a thrilling sauvignon. It is fragrant, has ripe, sweet tropical flavours - intense passionfruit, lychee, gooseberry - that are clean

vibrant and tangy, finishing fresh and zingy with some bright, flinty notes.

2011 ANGIULLONO SAUVIGNON BLANC \$17

The Crossing family's newish vineyard is on their pastoral property in the foothills of Mount Canobolas in the Orange region. The 2011 vintage has given us a sauvignon intense with ripe, sweet passionfruit and peach flavours, and crisp, zipping acidity to provide balance.

2011 OYSTER BAY SAUVIGNON BLANC \$19.95

I know this is Australia's largest selling white wine and plenty of people will drink it anyway. The 2011 is an excellent vintage. This is first-rate Marlborough sauvignon: intense, ripe tropical aromatics, gooseberry, lychee, pineapple flavours, and a touch of passionfruit.

2011 MIKE PRESS SAUVIGNON BLANC \$12

The Adelaide Hills label of former Mildara Blass chief winemaker Mike Press offers exceptional value across the board. While ordering direct is probably best, the wines are gradually becoming more widely available. Once again, the sauvignon is delightful; the shiraz is smart, too.

2011 FIFTH LEG SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC \$17.95

Oliver Crawford is delighted with the boost his Devil's Lair vineyards - in Margaret River's cool southern reaches - give to this fruity white blend. It is vibrant and tangy with intense, ripe fruit and a crisp, lively zing.

2010 CAPEL VALE "BENNY" CHARDONNAY \$17.95

This entry-level chardonnay from the Prattens' large family winery at Capel is delicious - straightforward and fruit driven. Sourced from different regions in Western Australia, it emphasises ripe, sweet tropical flavours (pineapple, guava) and is clean and refreshing.



THE BEST OF THE BEST 2012

SPLURGE

MUMM "MUNNIE GRAMANT" \$149.99

Thanks to the Australian dollar, champagne has never been so well-priced in this country, so there are plenty of sub-\$50 bubbles of good quality. This is significantly more expensive, because it is special, it is a blanc de blancs (made solely from chardonnay) from a single vineyard in the village of Gramant. It is made in the style that used to be called "cremant", is made with less pressure than normal and so is delicate and fine. In spite of this, there's intensity and power.



2009 BY FARR "FARRSIDE" PINOT NOIR \$60

Gary Farr (By Farr) and his son, Nick (Far Rising), are making sublime single site pinot noir in Geelong. The Farrside vineyard is only 10 years old but already produces exceptional pinot. Its ethereal perfumes follow through onto a palate that is complex and varietal. 2009 "Sangreal" is also brilliant.



2008 TARRAWARRA RESERVE CHARDONNAY \$50

Clare Halloran's 15 years at Tarawarra have seen the evolution of a distinctive style of Yarra Valley chardonnay. In 2008 this was a profound wine: beguiling white flower aromatics, complex white peach, nectarine flavours with nutty, savoury notes, satisfying viscosity, impeccable balance.

