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WINE & DINE
20 Great Reds
Under \$20

GEAR UP
Springtime
Is Tee Time


U-S AIRWAYS

Magazine

★
**THE
ULTIMATE
GRAZE**
EATING VENICE,
ONE BITE AT A TIME
★



Sarde in saor, a traditional
Venetian small plate

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Twenty Under \$20

When you want an inexpensive red wine, what do you choose?

By Nick Passmore

★ First things first: Don't expect great depth or complexity, not at this price. What you should look for instead is balance and harmony, a wine where all the constituent parts are singing together. This is the secret to any good wine, but it's easier to achieve when the winemaker has a generous budget. At lower prices, winemaking savvy and a gentle touch are key.

Any wine, especially young wines like these, should remind you of fresh fruit, not the stewed variety. Think of a summer peach, not the syrupy canned version. They should exude that marvelous combination of sweet and tart one finds in a June strawberry.

A successful red needs to have enough acidity to keep it fresh and lively, but not so much that it's tongue-curlingly astringent. Tartness must be balanced by the sweetness of ripe fruit.

Too many European red wines at, say, \$15, are thin, while their New World counterparts, including American, go to the other extreme and are gooey and overripe, designed to be drunk as aperitifs. The trick is to discover wines that rise above these stereotypes by combining the best of both.

Below are 20 red wines under \$20 that fit this ideal. They are wines that offer interest as well as pleasure, wines that succeed both before food and with every bite of steak or pizza.

Please note that they are nearly all young and will benefit from an hour or two's breathing before being served.

Also, prices may vary depending on purveyor.

Bandit Merlot NV

California

Quite possibly the best red wine I've had for so little money since Jimmy Carter was president.

\$7 for one liter

