



I Hate Wine Columns

Every wine column ever written says “and as I leaned against the rusted red tractor of Baron Claude Pompadou at his lush chateau, I marveled at how I could taste the perspiration of his forbears in his fabulous Chateau Pompadou Haut-Médoc Grand Cru (\$187).”

We don't do that kind of thing here. Wine is confusing, but it isn't complicated. It's just grape juice gone bad. Because we're confused about it, many of us are afraid to drink wine, or to try new wines.

Wine is best appreciated by those with a sense of adventure. If you love to travel, or even if you merely dream of travel, wine is your drink. You may never get to Napa Valley, but you can have a bottle Napa wine tonight. And maybe you can't afford a trip to the hot, chalky hills of Spain. But you can drink from them tonight for under \$10.

If you really want to drink wine, you're going to need a wine shop. I used to buy my wine at the grocery store. It was both plentiful and cheap, my primary criteria. But the reason that you want a real wine shop is that there will be people there who understand wine. Do you think that guy in the green nylon apron stacking the wine knows what goes with Pepper-Roasted Pork Loin? Egads !

Some folks think that wine shops are expensive. While it's true that the wine shop will carry some expensive wines that aren't in the drug store, they will also have plenty of “everyday” wines. If you're looking for a wine for under \$10, this is your code word. The code word for wines costing over \$30 is “special”, as in “I just called my boss a ‘colossal simp’ to his face, and I need to make it up to him with a *special* bottle of wine.” Wines costing between \$10 and \$30 are “nice” bottles.

Hey, I don't make this stuff up. I just report it. Two “nice” wines for the holidays, and one “special” one.

Hahn Gruner-Veltliner (\$ 12) Austria's national grape yields a wonderfully crisp white wine with nice mineral notes. One of the few wines that works with almost everything on your Thanksgiving table.

7 Deadly Zins (\$ 19) This blend of seven great Lodi Zinfandels will leave you panting for more. It's deep; it's rich; it's immensely flavorful. Serve it with any pork or beef dish.

Helyos Banyuls (\$ 50) It's only **The Ultimate Wine with Chocolate**. It's Grenache Noir from 60-year old vines rendered into a sinfully rich red dessert wine, but you don't care. If you want a splurge to fend off that inevitable post-holiday depression, this is likely it.

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