

9 WAYS

TO SAVE MONEY ON WINE



BY ANDY PERDUE & ERIC DEGERMAN

Introduction

We all want to save a little money, and we want to enjoy a glass of good wine with our midweek meal without having to go into debt. When we have friends over for a weekend dinner party, we want to show them a great time with delicious wines.



Fortunately, there are many ways to save money on wine without sacrificing quality or experience.

Wine is an agricultural product, a beverage meant to enhance food as much as to bring pleasure. Wine ranges from the incredibly cheap to the outrageously expensive. Somewhere in between is a happy medium, a range that most wine drinkers can afford and enjoy.

Through the next few pages, we will offer tips to shave a few dollars off your wine bill on your next trip to a grocery store or wine shop, plus ways to maximize the advantages of living near a winery.

We hope you enjoy this brief guide and are able to use it to find some bargains.

If this was passed along to you by a friend and you'd like to learn more about wine, we encourage you to head to our website: www.greatnorthwestwine.com or "like" us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GreatNorthwestWine>.

Andy Perdue and Eric Degerman
Great Northwest Wine

About us

Andy Perdue and Eric Degerman are full-time wine journalists who live in the Pacific Northwest and focus primarily on the wine regions of Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and Idaho.

Combined, they have more than 50 years of daily newspaper experience and nearly 35 years as wine writers. They are the founding editors of Wine Press Northwest magazine and now own and operate Great Northwest Wine, a news and information company.

In addition to [Great Northwest Wine](#), they also run such websites as [Noble Riesling](#) and [Wines Without Borders](#).

They also write a weekly wine column that is syndicated in 21 newspapers throughout the Pacific Northwest. They judge regional, national and international wine competitions throughout North America.

Here is a little more about each of them:

Eric Degerman (left): Eric grew up in Spokane, Wash., and graduated from Clark Community College in Vancouver, Wash., and the University of Washington in Seattle. Before writing about wine, he was a sportswriter who covered the Western Hockey League. He writes for a number of magazines, including Wine Press Northwest, Vineyard & Winery Management, Treasure, Walla Walla Lifestyles and Pacific Northwest Golfer. He lives in Washington wine country with his wife, Traci, and their Bombay cat, Ichiro.



Andy Perdue: Andy was born and raised in Bremerton, Wash., and graduated from Western Washington University in Bellingham with a degree in journalism. He is a third-generation journalist who has worked at a dozen newspapers in the West. He is the wine columnist for The Seattle Times. His first book was “The Northwest Wine Guide: A Buyer’s Handbook.” He also has contributed to several other books on Northwest wine, food and travel. He lives in Washington wine country with his wife, Melissa, and their daughter, Niranjana.

1. Look for second labels

Some top wineries bottle lower-priced wines under another label. These wines tend to be quite superb but for one reason or another did not make the cut in the winery's final top blends. Often, the wines are priced at half of what a winery's best wines go for without an appreciable drop in quality.

Perhaps the most famous second label is Mouton Cadet, a brand for the great Chateau Mouton Rothschild, one of the First Growths of France's Bordeaux region. While a bottle of Mouton Rothschild sells for more than \$250 U.S., Mouton Cadet goes for around \$10.



In Washington state, one of the top second labels is Nelms Road, a brand created by Woodward Canyon Winery in the Walla Walla Valley. Owner Rick Small launched Nelms Road in the late 1990s because he didn't believe he should be charging high-end prices for grapes that were coming from young vines.

Small and his winemaker, Kevin Mott, make the wine for Nelms Road in exactly the same style as for the Woodward Canyon wines — but make

decisions based on how each barrel fits into their upper-tier blends. Small admits that he could make a lot more money by putting everything they make into Woodward Canyon, but he doesn't think that is the right thing to do.

Woodward Canyon makes two varieties under the Nelms Road brand: Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Both sell for around \$25, less than half of Small's Artist Series Cabernet Sauvignon.

Another Walla Walla Valley winery, Dusted Valley Vintners, has a second label called Boomtown. The wines sell for less than \$20 — about half of the Dusted Valley wines. The wines are made under the direction of owners/winemakers Corey Braunel and Chad Johnson by Wahluke Wine Co., a custom-winemaking facility in Washington state.

2. Buy by the case

When you find a wine you really like, buy it by the case. Nearly every winery and many retailers offer anywhere from 5 percent to 15 percent discounts when you buy multiple bottles. And some will give you the same discount even if you buy 12 different bottles of wine.

Buying wine by the case can seem daunting. It might feel like you're buying 20 cans of cocoa powder at Costco and you'll never use it all. But if you really enjoy a particular wine, then purchasing it by the case can make a lot of sense.

Let's say you find a wine at a local winery that costs \$15 per bottle. If you were to purchase 12 bottles individually, that would cost you \$180. But if you buy it by the case and receive a 10 percent discount, the price of that case drops to \$162 — that's like getting one bottle for free.



If you receive a 15 percent discount — which is more typical for case purchases — the price of that case just went down to \$153, which is like getting nearly two bottles for free.

And it's not just wineries that provide case discounts. Most wine shops and grocery stores will, too. In fact, ask before you buy if case discounts are available. If not, consider taking your business to a store that does provide discounts — even for a mixed case of wine.

If you are purchasing a case of a really delicious and affordable wine, consider this your “house wine,” something you can pull out on a Tuesday night to go with whatever is for dinner. You'll no doubt go through that case in less than a year, since you'll probably open at least one bottle per month.

And if you decide to buy a case of a more expensive wine, one that costs \$25 or more per bottle, it might be fun to open one bottle per year over the course of a dozen years, taking a few notes on each bottle to see how it evolves.

3. Buy at discount stores

Large retailers such as Costco, Trader Joe's, Sam's Club and Grocery Outlet are able to use their buying power to purchase wine at lower prices and pass those savings along to their customers. It is not unusual to find discounts of 20 percent or more at such stores.



Costco is now the largest wine retailer in the United States. With this comes its ability to purchase wines at discounts because it is buying dozens or hundreds of cases of wine at a time. These significant discounts are passed along to you and other consumers as a way to entice your patronage.

Trader Joe's is famous for Charles Shaw, known colloquially as "Two Buck Chuck." Under the Charles Shaw label, more than a half-dozen different wines are produced. And while they are variable in quality, they tend to be quaffable, everyday wines.

Grocery Outlet is a store that steeply discounts nearly everything it sells. This includes wine that is either at the end of the vintage or is being discounted for other reasons. Regardless, many superb wines at dirt-cheap prices can be found at Grocery Outlet.

In addition, look for house brand wines. For example, Costco sells Kirkland brand wines, which are made for the company by bulk wine producers and wineries. Large wine discounters such as Beverages & More and Total Wine & More will have wine custom-made for their company label. These can be terrific wines because they are produced under the company's direction. For example, BevMo cellar master Wilfred Wong will travel to Europe or South America to taste through wine blending trials and decide what the company's wines will include.

4. Buy wines from the Southern Hemisphere

Many countries from the Southern Hemisphere are producing wines of good quality at nice prices. Look for wines from Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Chile. It is not difficult to find examples of rich, delicious wines for \$10 to \$15 U.S. from these countries.

Here's a rundown of Southern Hemisphere countries to look for:

Australia: Oz is one of the world's largest producers of wine now, thanks to tremendous growth in the past 25 years. The country is best known for Shiraz (also known as Syrah), though it also produces a large amount of Cabernet Sauvignon. The best-known value wine coming out of Australia is Yellow Tail.

Argentina: This South American country has a rich history of winemaking and has made international waves over the past 20 years. It's now known for exporting Malbecs that retail for \$20 or less. Also look for red blends of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

Chile: Spaniards brought wine grapes to Chile more than 400 years ago. It is well known for red wines, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and the rare Bordeaux grape Carménère.

New Zealand: In the past 15 years, New Zealand has become well known for its sassy Sauvignon Blanc, a white grape. But now New Zealand is branching out a bit, crafting Pinot Noir, among other varieties. You'll find New Zealand wines fairly easily in grocery stores.

South Africa: Since the end of apartheid, South Africa's wine industry justified more international recognition. South Africa grows Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc. It's also well known for Pinotage, a red grape that is rare to find outside of South Africa.

Uruguay: The South American nation of Uruguay is beginning to make noise as a wine producer, with a focus on Tannat, a rare red grape variety. Wines from Uruguay are starting to show up in groceries and wine shops.

Brazil: Winemaking in Brazil has been around since the 1500s, but the South American country has gotten more serious in the past 30 years. These might be a little harder to find than wines from Argentina and Chile.

5. Buy oversize bottles

Magnums are 1.5 liters, or twice the normal bottle size. Some large wineries bottle wines in these oversize bottles at considerable discounts over what you might pay if you purchased two normal sized bottles.

You can save considerable amounts of money on wines if you buy them in magnums.

This is because a magnum bottle doesn't cost much more than a 750ml bottle, and the winery only pays once for the label, cork, foil, etc. These savings are usually passed along to you.

Yellow Tail, the popular Australian winery, sells magnums of its Shiraz for around \$10, equivalent to \$5 per 750 ml bottle. Two Vines, a Washington winery, bottles a lot of its production in magnums, too.

The only danger to purchasing magnums is that the wine needs to be consumed in a fairly short period of time, less than a week. This makes magnums perfect for parties, weddings, holiday meals, etc.



A couple that plans to enjoy one to two glasses of wine per night with dinner will save money by buying magnums. Here's the math: Two 5-ounce glasses of wine per night multiplied by five nights is 50 ounces — and a 1.5 liter bottle of wine holds 50.7 ounces of wine.

If you aren't sure you will drink that much wine that quickly, go to tip No. 6.

6. Consider box wines

Box wines - also known as bag-in-a-box wines - have the reputation of being low brow, thanks to bottom-shelf brands from California such as Franzia and Carlo Rossi.

However, many reputable wineries are packaging wines in boxes now, and you save because a bag and a box are less expensive than a bottle and a cork. Plus, box wines are almost always packaged in larger amounts, such as 3 to 5 liters.



Bandit, a California producer, packages wines in Tetra Paks, similar to your child's juice boxes. Bandit's 1 liter box of Pinot Grigio, for example, goes for less than \$8. Other top box brands to look for are Bota Box (3 liters of Shiraz for \$20), Black Box (3 liters of Merlot for \$25) and Wine Cube from Target (3 liters of Merlot for \$15).

Badger Mountain Vineyard, Washington's largest organic wine producer, created a line of boxed wines called Pure Red and Pure White. The 3-liter wines sell for about \$25, and they are sold nationwide, particularly on the West Coast. The wines are certified organic and have no sulfites added.

One nice aspect of bag-in-a-box wines is the wine stays in a vacuum after you open it. Thus, it can last weeks on your kitchen counter without going bad. This is perfect if you don't drink wine every evening. Plus, the box fits nicely on at kitchen counter or in a refrigerator without taking up too much room.

The boxes also are almost completely recyclable (some communities require that the spigot be removed first).

Premium box wines are less expensive because their materials cost less to produce. They also are lighter-weight, meaning a winery's costs for shipping are much lower. These cost savings are passed on to the consumer.

Keep an eye out for wines in foil pouches, too. They should offer even greater savings because the packages are lighter and less expensive.

7. Join a wine club



If you like a winery, consider joining its wine club. Most wineries have wine clubs because they enjoy selling their wines directly to consumers — they make more money this way by not having to share profits with distributors and retailers.

The benefits of wine clubs are many. One is you typically can buy any wine at the winery for a discount — sometimes as much as 20 percent. With wine clubs, the consumer is in the driver's seat because wineries want to keep you as a loyal customer for as long as possible.

Selling directly to consumers — even for 20 percent discounts — means more dollars in wineries' pockets than the 50 percent rate they have to sell to wholesalers.

Typically, wineries will send anywhere from two to six bottles to wine club members on a monthly or quarterly basis. These are often exclusive releases for wine club members only. If you really like a wine and want to reorder, it will often be available for a solid discount.

Wine club members also might receive recipes and invitations to special events. And when you visit the winery, it will typically waive any tasting fees you might otherwise incur.

8. Work for wine

You have to live near a winery for this tip, but if you offer to work — especially during harvest — you could get paid in wine. Working at a winery during harvest is fun, and you get to know the staff and better understand the winemaking process.



If the winery is small enough, you can find work any time of the year. You might find yourself helping with bottling, crushing grapes or washing equipment.

If you're interested in spending a weekend or some spare time working at a winery, send an email asking for volunteer opportunities.

Note: If you earn the equivalent of \$600 or more, expect the winery to send you a 1099 at the end of the year — and to pay taxes on it.

You might also consider working in a winery's tasting room. You probably won't make much more than minimum wage, however you will be eligible for employee discounts, which often are 30 percent and can go for as high as 50 percent.

9. Watch for end-of-vintage sales

Groceries typically will discount wines when the winery is ready to sell the next vintage. You'll often find these wines on the ends of aisles in the wine, meat or seafood departments of grocery sales. Discounts can run from 10 percent to 30 percent.

Discount stores such as Grocery Outlet often get access to wines that need to be moved quickly — and are priced accordingly. So let's say a winery is sold and some past vintages need to be moved to make room. Wine that has been languishing in a warehouse suddenly will show up on Grocery Outlet shelves at 50 to 70 percent off of retail.



If a wine isn't moving particularly well and several pallets are sitting in a warehouse and a winery feels the need to move on to the next vintage, it will discount those wines to get things moving.

If you are a wine club member or are on a winery's or wine shops mailing list, you will be the first to be privy to these discounts.

Thank you!

We appreciate you reading this far, and we hope you have found at least a few tips and ideas that will save you money the next time you purchase wine.

If you would like to learn more about wine, here are some suggestions:

Reviews of wines from the Pacific Northwest, updated daily:

<http://www.greatnorthwestwine.com/category/winereviews/>

Stories and reviews about wine from outside of the Northwest:

<http://www.wineswithoutborders.com>

Andy Perdue's weekly columns in The Seattle Times:

<http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/>

Eric Degerman and Andy Perdue's syndicated weekly wine columns:

<http://www.heraldnet.com/section/BLOG5203>

And if this ebook has been forwarded and you would like to sign up for our free Pacific Northwest Wine of the Week email newsletter, please go to:

<http://www.greatnorthwestwine.com/newsletter/>