

Best-selling claret: Top Bordeaux wines under \$30

There's plenty of great-value wines among the top-selling, lower-priced Bordeaux reds in the USA. Stacy Slinkard tasted through the bottles that fly off the shelves and recommends the everyday wines that are worth seeking out.

Stacy Slinkard
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Both the Right and Left Bank have plenty to offer for everyday drinking – if you know where to look.

To distil down the best affordable claret buys in the US, I reached out to numerous US wine merchants to identify their top sellers. **Astor Wines**, **JJ Buckley**, **K&L Wine Merchants**, **Wine.com** and **Zachys** were chosen for their broad **Bordeaux** selections, customer-focused sales and shipping capabilities.

Along with Jane Anson and Andy Howard MW, I then selected the best buys under \$30 from these five American merchants.

I tasted everything from a 2016 biodynamic bottle from Pomerol to a handful of stellar Haut-Médoc ambassadors, and a tiny-production bottling of Vieux Château St André 2016 from St-Emilion's smallest satellite appellation (and the home estate of Jean-Claude Berrouet, the humble winemaker behind 45 vintages of Petrus).

Value meets quality

While **Bordeaux** has a reputation for expensive bottles, according to renowned wine educator Kevin Zraly, 80% of Bordeaux wines in the US are sold in the \$8-\$25 price range and are ready to be consumed within a year or two of release.

Michele Weiss Jensen, wine buyer at Zachys, agrees, sharing: 'We've always had success with the under-\$25 wines from the Right Bank, especially in St-Emilion and some of the Côtes de Bordeaux, but we're seeing even more movement with this price point on the Left Bank as well. The 2015s from Margaux and Haut-Médoc are good examples.'

Curious what distinguishes a \$30 bottle from a \$300 bottle of Bordeaux? You're not alone.

Key factors are vintage year and ratings, prestigious vineyard sites, older vines, lower yields, ageing in new oak and châteaux reputations.

The great châteaux in top vintages will naturally command the highest prices, and their wines will usually require at least a decade of ageing.

For earlier accessibility, look to second labels, Right Bank bottles that lean into **Merlot**, or producers with a reputation for building quality and value into their price points. These wines can be lighter in body and mature faster, often showing understated fruit, an easygoing elegance and versatile food-pairing capabilities.

Wilfred Wong, Wine.com's chief storyteller and wine reviewer, echoes these sentiments on what consumers can expect from Bordeaux at more accessible price points: 'While the world of wines continues to evolve – with red wines becoming more extracted and sweeter – red Bordeaux has stayed true to its past.'

In today's market, Bordeaux under \$25 offers red and black fruit, a firm palate, earth and spice. Bordeaux APs and Bordeaux Supérieur remain some of the best dinner-wine options available globally.'

One quick tip: the vintages in Bordeaux from 2015-2018 have been unusually consistent and well rated (averaging in the mid-to-upper 90pts for overall vintage ratings) on both banks.

Bordeaux wines under \$30: The full list with stockists & prices

Tasting notes below

91 Château Fombrauge, St-Émilion (Grand Cru Classé) 2016 – JJ Buckley \$29.94

92 Château Le Rey, Castillon Côtes de Bordeaux 2018 – JJ Buckley \$27.94

91 Vieux Château Saint André, St-Émilion (Montagne-St-Émilion) 2016 – Zachys
\$24.99

90 Château Cantemerle, Les Allées de Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc 2015 – Zachys
\$26.99

91 Château Greysac, Haut-Médoc (Cru Bourgeois) 2015 – Wine.com \$23.99

91 Château Bellevue Peycharneau, Bordeaux Supérieur 2016 – Wine.com \$19.99

90 Château Peyrabon, Haut-Médoc (Cru Bourgeois) 2016 – Klwines.com \$19.99

91 Château de Malleret, Haut-Médoc (Cru Bourgeois) 2015 – Klwines.com \$19.99

90 Château Cantelaudette, Graves-de-Vayres 2015 – Astor Wines & Spirits \$23.96

90 Château Dauzac, La Bordeaux de Dauzac, Margaux (5ème Cru Classé) 2018 –
Astor Wines & Spirits \$21.99

Château de Malleret, Haut-Médoc, Cru Bourgeois, 2015



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Tasted by Stacy Slinkard (at USA, 15 Mar 2021)

Part of **Best-selling claret: Top Bordeaux wines under \$30**



From the fantastic 2015 vintage, this Cru Bourgeois is as committed to making exceptional wine as it is to breeding top of the line dressage horses. Rich, ripe and bursting with dark fruit character, wisps of smoke, tobacco and leather leave an enduring mark on the full-throttle finish.

Drinking Window 2022 - 2030

