

10 Bold California Red Blends

New reviews of hearty reds for \$28 or less



Photo by: Alanna Hale

Ferrari-Carano makes an intriguing red blend with Sangiovese, Malbec, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Tim Fish

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

Blends often make interesting wines, with each grape adding their touch to the final wine. The French are well-versed in this, from Bordeaux to the Rhône Valley to Champagne.

California has taken a page from France's book. This week's selection offers red blends that are lively and plump with personality, hailing from all over the Golden State, from Santa Barbara to Sonoma County. These wines have the added charm of good value. None sell for more than \$28 and they range from 88 to 91 points; many are widely available.

LE P'TIT PAYSAN Le P'tit Pape Central Coast 2015 Score: 91 | \$22

Pairs elegant fruit with a zesty sense of gaminess, accented by dried cherry, smoky dried herb and subtle leather hints that take on richness toward the refined tannins. Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Counoise and Cinsault. Drink now through 2024. 1,580 cases made.—*T.F.*

MARGERUM M5 Santa Barbara County 2016 Score: 91 | \$28

Sleek and precise, with raspberry and [i]garrigue[n] aromas and refined cherry, licorice and savory pepper flavors. Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Counoise and Cinsault. Drink now through 2026. 3,085 cases made.—*T.F.*

FERRARI-CARANO Siena Sonoma County 2015 Score: 90 | \$21

An eclectic blend, with a zesty sense of style, offering compelling raspberry, smoky anise and spice flavors that have a snappy finish. Sangiovese, Malbec, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2024. 29,000 cases made.—*T.F.*

PROSPECT 772 Black Tie Charlie California 2015 Score: 90 | \$27

Not a wine for the timid, this is bold and concentrated, with brooding blackberry and licorice aromas and deep plum and pepper flavors that finish with muscular tannins. Petite Sirah and Syrah. Best after 2018. 349 cases made.—*T.F.*

TENSLEY Fundamental Central Coast 2016 Score: 90 / \$18

Loaded with personality, offering zesty blackberry, orange peel, espresso and smoked sage flavors. Syrah, Petite Sirah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Viognier. Drink now through 2024. 5,000 cases made.—*T.F.*

MORGAN Cotes du Crow's Monterey 2016 Score: 89 / \$18

Snappy and easy to drink, with floral raspberry, licorice and smoked pepper flavors that finish on a lively note. Grenache, Syrah and Tempranillo. Drink now through 2023. 5,500 cases made.—*T.F.*

FABIO VIVIANI Fatty Pope Paso Robles 2015 Score: 89 / \$20

Richly spiced, with flavors of cherry and elderberry that feature some creamy accents. The plush finish lingers with dried beef notes. Merlot, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Zinfandel. Drink now through 2020. 4,000 cases made.—*Kim Marcus*

BACON Central Coast 2016 Score: 88 / \$20

A fun wine to drink, with plump and zesty flavors of black raspberry, grilled herb and bacon. Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Merlot and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2023. 5,500 cases made.—*T.F.*

BOGLE Phantom California 2014 Score: 88 / \$18

Shows lots of torque and not much polish, but this is jammed with bold black cherry, espresso and toasted spice flavors. Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Drink now through 2025. 108,000 cases made.—*T.F.*

CA' MOMI Rosso di Ca' Momi California 2015 Score: 88 / \$15

Perfumed, spicy and well-oaked, this folds together nicely, with rich layers of red and dark fruit, a supple, polished texture and a broad, expansive finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Merlot and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2023. 8,145 cases made.—*James Laube*

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