

**DRINK**

## IN PRAISE OF CHEAP WINE

Winemaker Charles Smith on why good wine doesn't have to break the bank

BY [CHARLES SMITH](#) POSTED FEBRUARY 2, 2016



Americans, for some reason, are just realizing that they enjoy having wine on the table every night, like Europeans and South Americans have been doing for centuries. In Chile, France, Italy, and Spain, wine has always been as integral to dining as bread, and each of those countries produces fantastic, affordable, everyday bottles—I'm not talking about cheap wine, but *inexpensive* wine that's still high quality.

How do you track down a budget bottle that has some integrity? You start by looking for a producer who makes both affordable wines and very high-end wines. They have their

reputations to maintain, so you can be sure they're not putting out a bad inexpensive bottle. A vineyard producing a very high-end wine has the conditions to produce a quality inexpensive wine, too; the only difference is that they produce the cheaper one at a much greater volume.

Some wine regions are just good at producing affordable wines, so look for bottles from Germany's Mosel, France's southern Rhône valley, or here in Washington state. We're a younger wine state, commercially speaking, so we have access to tons of acreage with great soil that lets us produce a large volume of high quality wine at a great price. Sure, I've also got to sell a lot to keep the cost down, but it's a responsibility that's important to me. A huge volume doesn't necessarily lead to lower quality; it can mean giving more people access to really great wines.

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