

MAURO ON Wine

FINDING WINE VALUES IN 2003

by Rich Mauro

It is said that everyone loves a bargain but I think consumers actually are more interested in finding everyday values, like wines at a price justifiable relative to their quality. Most consumers either consciously or unconsciously calculate this price/quality ratio when purchasing wine.

Smart consumers demand not only quality but also a fair price. They've worked hard for their money (most of them any way) and they deserve the quality they think they're paying for.

It is also important to support wineries that work hard to produce good wine and sell it at a fair price. They should be rewarded for their efforts.

Interestingly, the term "value" usually is associated with wines in the lower price ranges (nowadays the cutoff price point seems to be \$20), even though it is possible to find good value at almost any price.

In general, in this price category, I expect the wines to be reliable, immediately enjoyable, and soft, with bright fruit flavors. But the best values deliver more character than you would expect for the price.

While it certainly is possible to find value in wines priced over \$20, I do think it gets more difficult as prices increase. At least when we have paid \$10 for a disappointing bottle, we can console ourselves that it didn't cost that much. As prices go up, certainly so do expectations.

Such wines should deliver at a minimum not only solid fruit flavors but also levels of complexity rare at lower prices, as well as more character and longevity.

My tastings this year have demonstrated once again that there is a lot of wine out there at all price levels whose quality does not justify the price. Thankfully, I have found many that do and want to give them recognition.

Rich Mauro writes for Colorado's **Beverage Analyst** and the **Colorado Springs Gazette**.

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CALIFORNIA

Sometimes it seems that it has gotten harder in recent years to find good values from California but I have found plenty of gems this year. Even with the unfortunate rise in trophy wines that are just as often flashy and soulless as distinctive and complex, and always exorbitantly priced, there are plenty at higher price levels that provide a welcome antidote.

(1 of 3 Merlot recommendations:)

**Over \$20:
Merlot---2001
Charles Creek
"Miradero"**

