

Wine Spectator

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14 California Reds Under \$40

New reviews of Pinot Noirs and Rhône-style reds at attractive prices

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Tasting Highlights bring the best of the past week's tastings of California wines to WineSpectator.com members.

This week's focus is on red wines priced under \$40, including five wines that cost half that or less. There are a lot of standouts in this group, both for quality and value.

The top-scoring wines include a pair of Rhône blends from Prospect 772, a brand founded by Ron Pieretti and Wendy Sanda, tapping the talents of winemaker Jeff Cohn. Based out of Calaveras County in the Sierra foothills, Prospect 772 has developed a reputation for consistent, intense and detailed wines.

Retro Cellars has a terrific Petite Sirah in this week's mix, from Mike and Kara Dunn. The two grew up in the wine industry; Kara is the daughter of vintner Robert Pecot, and Mike is the son of Randy Dunn. Their wine is bold and aromatic.

It's worth nothing that Cline Cellars has made three great wines for under \$20, including two made from grapes from little-known Contra Costa County, which is located just east of Oakland.

AUTONOM Syrah California Law of Proportions 2008 Score: 92 | \$38

Tests the law of proportions in a beneficial way, stuffing rich blackberry, black licorice, tar and baked berries into a potent mix; full blown and not for those prone to fainting. Drink now through 2020. 50 cases made. —J.L.

NEYERS Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Roberts Road 2010 Score: 92 | \$35

Mature, with complex dried berry, anise and savory herb, reaching into damp forest floor, black tea and mushroomy notes that are long and persistent. Drink now through 2020. 179 cases made. —J.L.

PROSPECT 772 The Brat Sierra Foothills 2009 Score: 92 | \$36

Hardly a brat, this offers a tight, spicy mix of wild berry, fresh earth, mineral and cedar, Full-bodied and firmly tannic, framing the flavors nicely. Ends with a mineral-laced raspberry core that's fresh and spicy. Grenache and Syrah. Another delightful new wine from this producer. Drink now through 2020. 283 cases made. —J.L.

PROSPECT 772 The Brawler Sierra Foothills 2009 Score: 92 | \$36

A potent, rich and graceful mix of scorched earth, dried berry, roasted herb and spices, all tightly focused, with muscular yet well-integrated tannins. Ends in a long, persistent finish with shades of melted licorice. Syrah and Viognier. Best from 2013 through 2023. 173 cases made. —J.L.

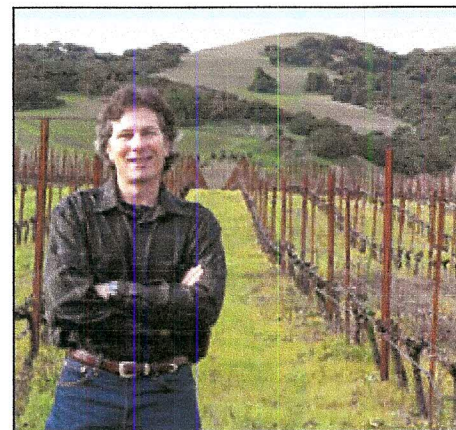
JOSEPH SWAN Syrah Russian River Valley Trenton Estate Vineyard 2006

Score: 92 | \$28

Notably complex and stylish, with hot brick, dark and dried berries, roasted herb and cedar. Full-bodied and rustic, yet it's that edginess and complex finish that make it so compelling. Best from 2013 through 2023. 149 cases made. —J.L.

ALTA COLINA GSM Paso Robles 2009 Score: 90 | \$38

Intense tar, black licorice and dense berry flavors are rich and extracted, gaining detail, with



Courtesy of Cline Cellars

Winemaker Charlie Tsegeletos has produced some noteworthy values at Cline Cellars.

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