



## Italian Holiday Wines Under \$20

Charles Scicolone (December 22, 2011)



Find out how Italian wine is a very good buy, especially in these difficult economic times. 4 very good inexpensive wines with the best balance between quality and cost

During the holiday season, my wife Michele tells me what she is going to cook and I try to find the

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best wine for each dish. For our Christmas dinner, she is making manicotti followed by roasted capon with struffoli for dessert. I have selected a Dolcetto and a Valpolicella to begin the meal, both of which will go very well with the manicotti.

For the roasted capon, the Rosso di Montalcino is just right. Matching wine with Struffoli is a challenge but I will be serving Moscato D'Asti, a low alcohol dessert wine that is slightly sparkling. Italy is no longer known for cheap wines confined to Italian immigrants' restaurants adorned with red and white checkered tablecloths. However it has kept a tradition of very good yet inexpensive wines and it still offers the best balance between quality and cost. This makes Italian wine a very good buy, especially in these difficult economic times. The wines I have selected are all under \$20 and are available in most wine stores with a good Italian selection...

**Dolcetto "D'OH" 2010 Piedmont Dolcetto DOC 100% Dolcetto Clavesana.** Fermented in temperature controlled stainless steel tanks, this is a fresh fruity wine with hints of cherry. The slogan on the label says, "You D'OH Something to Me" and I agree. You will find this wine very enjoyable. **\$10**

**Valpolicella Classical Lucchine DOC 2009 Tedeschi (Veneto)** is made from 25% Corvina, 25% Corvinone, 30% Rondinella, 20% other red grapes. Lucchine is the name of the vineyard where the grapes are grown in the heart of the Valpolicella area. The vines are over 25 years old. The grapes are hand harvested at the beginning of October. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks. The grapes are in contact with the skins for only eight days. This is to ensure that the wine will be fresh and fruity. After malolactic fermentation the wine spends the winter in stainless steel and is bottled in March and released one month later. This wine has fresh red fruit flavors and aromas with hints of cherries, and very good acidity. **\$18**

**Rosso di Montalcino DOC 2009 Castelli Martinuzzi (Tuscany) 100% Sangiovese.** This wine is aged in oak barrels for 8 to 10 months and a minimum of 2 months in the bottle before release. With berry scents, violets and cherry flavors and a lingering finish and aftertaste, this is a wine that deserves to be called a "Baby Brunello". **\$18**

**Moscato d'Asti 2010 DOCG Cascinetta Vietti (Piedmont) 100% Moscato.** The grapes are selected from vineyards that are almost 35 years old. The grapes are crushed, pressed and clarified. Alcoholic fermentation occurs in stainless steel tanks to preserve some natural CO2 from the fermentation. There is no malolactic fermentation which preserves acidity, varietal fruit character and freshness. The wine is held in stainless steel tanks until bottling. This Moscato d'Asti has intense aromas of peaches, rose petals and ginger. The wine is delicately sweet and sparkling with modest acidity, good balance, complexity and a finish of fresh apricots. With only 5.5% alcohol, it is a perfect dessert wine. **\$16.**

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