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Democracy Dies in Darkness

Upgrade your July Fourth cookout with these 3 red wines, each under \$25

By Dave McIntyre

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Here are three U.S. red wines under \$25 that would be ideal for your July Fourth cookout. We also have two whites to prime your palate — a rare Beaujolais Blanc from France and a racy white from Sicily.

GREAT VALUE
Kiona Vineyards Estates Cuvée
2017(Excellent/Extraordinary)

Columbia Valley, Wash., \$17

Kiona Vineyards is now in its third generation of family stewardship, making it one of the oldest wineries in Washington. As they joke on the label: “Our crowning achievement: We all still like each other.” And, after many years, I still love their wines. This blend is cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot, sangiovese and lemerger, making it a little bit Bordeaux, a little Italy, a smidgen Austria and all Washington. Lovely. Alcohol by Volume: 14.2 percent.

Distributed in the District and Maryland by Lanterna, in Virginia by Roanoke Valley Wine Co.: Available in the District at Central Liquors, Chevy Chase Wine & Spirits, Cork & Fork. Available in Maryland at Bella’s Liquors, Giolitti Delicatessen, Pinky’s West Street Liquors in Annapolis; Delaney Wines and Spirits in Towson; Magothy Wine & Spirits in Severna Park; Wishing Well Liquors in Easton. Available in Virginia at Arrowine and Cheese in Arlington; Grapevine in Warrenton; the Light Horse Restaurant in Alexandria; Rappahannock Pizza Kitchen in Sperryville.

GREAT VALUE

Upwell Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 (Excellent)

California, \$17

This juicy cabernet sauvignon captures some of California’s opulence with a velvety texture, aided by 15 percent petite sirah from Lodi rounding out the blend. We could have a pleasant debate over whether the petite sirah dominates the cabernet, and probably finish the bottle before we settle the question. Look for jammy, dark-berry fruit flavors and a hint of earth on a long, sweet-tasting finish. Pair it with grilled or roasted beef or maybe even chocolate cake (though I’m touching the third rail of wine and food pairing with that one!). If there’s any left, pair it with conversation — it doesn’t even have to be about the petite sirah in the blend. ABV: 13.5 percent.

Distributed by Salveto: Available in the District at Foxtrot (Georgetown, Mount Vernon Square). Available in Maryland at Frederick Wine House in Frederick; Wine Source in Baltimore. Available in Virginia at the Bottle Stop in Occoquan; Bottlecraft in Virginia Beach; Bottleworks, Libbie Market, Manchester’s Table, Oxford Cellars, Richmond Wine Station, Shields Market in Richmond; Department of Beer and Wine, Unwined (Bellevue, King Street) in Alexandria; Foods of All Nations, Tavern & Grocery in Charlottesville; Grand Cru in Arlington; Norm’s Beer & Wine in Vienna; Oakton Wine Shop in Oakton; Puck’s Market in Henrico; Screwtop Wine Bar & Cheese Shop in Arlington; the Wine Attic in Clifton; Wine House in Fairfax; the Wine Outlet (Great Falls, McLean, Vienna); Washington Street Purveyors in Lexington.

Blackboard Red Wine by Matthews 2018 (Excellent)

Columbia Valley, \$23

Here's a Bordeaux-style blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc that shows American exuberance and style with ripe, sweet flavors of blackberries and cherries and a hint of dark chocolate on the finish. There's also a whiff of volatile acidity that gives the flavors a little "lift," in wine-geek parlance — this becomes more pronounced after the wine is opened for a few days. Some of the profits are donated to educational charities, hence the name. ABV: 14.6 percent.

Distributed by Winebow: Available in the District at Cairo Wine & Liquor, Calvert Woodley, Central Liquors, Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits, Michigan Liquors, Pearson's, Rodman's, S&S Liquor, Schneider's of Capitol Hill. Available in Maryland at Balducci's in Bethesda; Edgewater Liquors in Edgewater; Grape Expectations in Gaithersburg; Longmeadow Wine & Liquors in Hagerstown; Orion Wine & Spirits in Frederick; Parkway Deli & Restaurant in Silver Spring; Takoma Beverage Co. in Takoma Park. Available in Virginia at Arrowine and Cheese, Northside Social in Arlington; Cheesetique (Alexandria, Shirlington); Dominion Wine and Beer in Falls Church; Vino Bistro in Leesburg.

Donnafugata Anthùlia Bianco 2019 (Excellent/Extraordinary)

Sicily, Italy, \$20

Peaches, apricots, mint and sage are somehow captured in this vibrant white wine from Sicily. Pair it with some grilled seafood, then close your eyes and let your imagination conjure the sound of Mediterranean waves caressing the shore. The distributor will soon be offering the 2020. Certified sustainable viticulture. ABV: 12.5 percent.

Imported by Folio Fine Wine Partners, distributed in the District and Maryland by M. Touton Selection, in Virginia by RNDC: Available in the District at A. Litteri, Ace Beverage, Bacchus Wine Cellar, Burka's Wine & Liquor, Calvert Woodley, Mimi's Convenience Mart, Morris Miller Wine & Liquor, Rodman's, Stellina Pizzeria, Whole Foods Market (P Street). Available in Maryland at Cuvino Trattoria Pizza Enoteca in Timonium; Downtown Crown Wine and Beer in Gaithersburg; Grosvenor Market in Rockville; Hop N Grape in North Bethesda; Petite Cellars, Pine Orchard Liquors in Ellicott City; Pizzeria Da Marco in Bethesda; Port of Call Liquors in Solomons; Rodman's (White Flint); Simpatico Italy's Finest in St. Michaels; Shawan Liquors in Cockeysville; Wine Source in Baltimore. Available in Virginia at Bozzelli's (Arlington); Unwined (King Street) in Alexandria.

Chauvet Frères Beaujolais Blanc 2018 (Excellent)

Beaujolais, France, \$20

White Beaujolais is rather rare, but it gives a delicious, minerally expression of chardonnay, the white grape of Burgundy. The closest comparison would be the chardonnays from the nearby Mâcon region. This is leaner, more focused, as if it was actually trying to squeeze wine from stones rather than grapes. ABV: 12.5 percent.

Imported by Sera Wine Imports, distributed by M. Touth Selection: Available in the District at the Bottle Shop, Central Liquors, Downtown Liquors, Morris Miller Wine & Liquor, Rodman's. Available in Maryland at Crescent Wine & Spirits in Bowie; Downtown Crown Wine and Beer in Gaithersburg; Edgewater Liquors in Edgewater; Hop N Grape in North Bethesda; Petite Cellars, Wine Bin in Ellicott City; Roland's in Chesapeake Beach; Shawan Liquors in Cockeysville; Spirits of Mt. Vernon, Wine Source in Baltimore. Available in Virginia at Slater's Market in Alexandria.

Availability information is based on distributor records. Wines might not be in stock at every listed store and might be sold at additional stores. Prices are approximate. Check [WineSearcher.com](https://www.wine-searcher.com) to verify availability, or ask a favorite wine store to order through a distributor.