

5 TO WATCH: UNDERRATED WINE REGIONS

Wine isn't just a beverage; it's also fashion. Grape varieties, winemaking techniques and growing regions go in and out of style just like miniskirts and three-button sport coats.

But that doesn't mean your tastes need to follow the leader. Here are five areas producing wines that are as delicious as ever ... and ridiculously underrated (and underpriced) right now.

FRIULI

WHERE Italy's multi-cultural upper right-hand corner, west of Slovenia

WHY UNDERRATED? Italian wine isn't supposed to taste like this!

WHAT'S GREAT Flinty whites from little-known varieties, and translucent reds refreshing enough to pair with fish.

PRODUCERS TO SEEK OUT Vie di Romans, Livio Felluga, Marco Felluga



YAKIMA VALLEY

WHERE The farmlands of Central Washington, a two-hour drive southeast of Seattle

WHY UNDERRATED? Designated the state's first official viticultural region in 1983, Yakima has been eclipsed by higher-profile sites in the rest of the state, notably Walla Walla.

WHAT'S GREAT Firm Cabernet Sauvignons and bright Cabernet Francs—and nearly anything from grapes grown in the Boushey vineyard near Grandview

PRODUCERS TO SEEK OUT Col Solare (owned by Chateau Ste. Michelle), Milbrandt, and Boushey bottlings from McCrea and Avennia



CLARE VALLEY

WHERE Rural South Australia, north of Adelaide

WHY UNDERRATED? The Barossa, Australia's best-known wine region, is half an hour down the road. Clare's thirst-quenching whites get lost in the Barossa hype.

WHAT'S GREAT Some of the New World's best Rieslings, and below-the-radar Cabernet Sauvignon made in a more nuanced style than the typical Australian bruiser.

PRODUCERS TO SEEK OUT Jim Barry, Pikes, Kilikanoon



SWARTLAND

WHERE The South African hinterlands, some 40 miles north of Cape Town

WHY UNDERRATED? South African wines have never been trendy, except for about two months before and during soccer's 2010 World Cup. And the majority of them sold abroad are serviceable Cabernet-based blends from the Cape Town suburbs.

WHAT'S GREAT Mourvedre, Grenache and Chenin Blanc from heirloom vines.

PRODUCERS TO SEEK OUT Sadie Family, A.A. Badenhorst, Mullineux



BORDEAUX

WHERE Southwest France, just off the Atlantic coast

WHY UNDERRATED? The world's benchmark wine region for decades, it doesn't fit today's hipster narrative of earnest farmer-producers making small batches of wine from obscure grapes.

WHAT'S GREAT Its Cabernet- and Merlot-based wines remain the standard that Napa Valley—and everywhere else—still aspires to reach.

PRODUCERS TO SEEK OUT Calon-Ségur, Clos Fourtet, Cantenac Brown

