

# Wine Spectator online

exploring wine with tim fish *posted: Jun 8, 2011 12:00pm ET*

## Layer Cake a Bargain Passport to the Wine World

### Wines from Argentina, Italy, Australia and California overdeliver on quality for their \$15 price

Shekels, moolah, simoleons, greenbacks, dinero- no matter what language or lingo you use, money is something you'll need by the basketful to tour the wine regions of the world. Even if you skip the scenery and airfare and merely sample the world from the local wine shelves, it can be overwhelming and expensive in its own right.

Maybe that's why I think **Jayson Woodbridge has the right idea with his Layer Cake label**: five different varietal wines from key regions around the globe, all priced around \$15. There's a Malbec from Argentina, Italian Primitivo, Australian Shiraz and a Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon from California.



The irony is that Woodbridge also makes Hundred Acre, a \$300 Napa Cabernet that my colleague James Laube consistently rates as outstanding. That's quite a price spread, \$15 to \$300. Woodbridge says it's all because of his grandfather, who taught him about wine and compared it to a layer cake; both have different layers of flavor and complexity.

My grandfather was not a guy who could afford Hundred Acre, Woodbridge said, so Layer Cake was born. **"I'm trying to make a wine that sells for \$15 and tastes like \$50."**

He's not far off. **The wines certainly overdeliver for the price.** The 2008 Primitivo, from the Puglia region of southern Italy, is a lively wine, with smoky herbs, cherry, tart plum and white pepper flavors. It's an Italian twist on Zinfandel. (The grapes are clones of the same variety.) I rated it 89 points, non-blind.

The 2009 Malbec Mendoza, from Argentina, has distinctive aromas of ripe plum and smoky spiced beef with supple and lively blackberry and graphite flavors. I rated it 88 points, non-blind.

Laube gave a score of 87 to Layer Cake Chardonnay Central Coast Virgin 2009, and I thought it was crisp yet supple, with lively and floral lemon and green apple notes. (Virgin in this case means the wine saw no oak.)

**The same winemaking team that makes Hundred Acre makes the Layer Cake wines, traveling from region to region to make each wine.** All the reds spend time in new French oak barrels. Consumers should have little trouble finding the wines; annual case production ranges between 20,000 and 80,000 for each of the five bottlings.

New Layer Cake wines are also on the way. A 2010 Pinot Noir from California's Central Coast will be released in September, and another wine is on the way, but Woodbridge is mum on its details. Trade secret, he says.