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Find Surprisingly Great Wine on the Cheap at Eli's Table on the Upper East Side

by [Levi Dalton](#) Dec 10, 2014, 12:04p



Courtesy of Eli's Table

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Eli Zabar's newly revamped restaurant (fka Taste) offers some excellent wines at reasonable prices. Here's what to order.

Arriving recently at **Eli's Table** — Eli Zabar's updated renovation of what was formerly Taste restaurant on the Upper East Side — I noted that a wine collector friend was already seated at another table. I assume normally that this gentleman would be happy to see me, as we've shared some times together, but on this night his face registered disappointment: "I'm sorry you are here," my friend called to me by way of greeting. "I had thought I was going to have this place all to myself to drink from for months, but now I realize I've only got days."

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Having a keen eye for value, my friend had already noted that the wine list — which draws from Eli Zabar's private wine collection — has many yesteryear vintages, often listed for yesteryear prices. This is especially true for areas in which Eli himself is known to have a lot of interest personally, such as Burgundy. Eli's blue puffer vest has for years made appearances at the Burgundy tastings around town, and apparently all was not for naught. He has been stocking away some wine, and now some of that wine has made its way onto the wine list of his new restaurant, and for bargain prices.

That's right, a restaurant has opened that offers inexpensive, aged Burgundy in the midst of the most on-fire, highly charged, big dollar Burgundy market in the history of the modern world. Wine hunters and Burgundy fiends are already charting Uber paths to the Upper East Side as a result, and Eli's Table may well exhibit the most gravitational pull on the wine drinker world of Manhattan since the Racines opening pulled everybody south awhile back.

Happily, your first 20 minutes of dinner conversation at Eli's Table will take care of itself, as your guests will quickly move towards topic number one, "My gosh, when was the last time I was up here?" before heading to the more apt topic number two, "What's the deal with this place?" You'll be able to tell them that there is wine for the drinking at very fair prices, and also that the accessible menu of well-prepared from a Sfoglia vet will pair nicely with said wine. Also that the wine service is competent, polite, and speedy. These realizations leave as the only big question mark what you should be drinking. Here are some suggestions to help with that:

You want to drink well without spending a lot:

Whites

Zind-Humbrecht Muscat 2006 (Alsace, France) \$51: Olivier Humbrecht is famous for his Riesling, but to my mind he is even more successful with varieties like Gewürztraminer and Muscat, where he seems to know just how much fruit to bring out without it being too much. Here is a rare chance to find a bottle of his Muscat with some age on it, and for basically the same price it was on release.

Mas Jullien Blanc 2006 (Languedoc, France) \$67: Somebody apparently has forgotten to tell Eli that this wine should be twice as expensive, or often is on other wine lists around town. This is an excellent example of just how good Southern French whites can be from the right producer.

Domaine Aux Moines Savennieres Roche Aux Moines 1994 (Loire Valley, France) \$70: This is the cherry vintage to pick from the 1990s at this producer, an old school producer of Chenin Blanc in a they-don't-make-them-like-that-anymore mold.

Jean-Marc Roulot Bourgogne Blanc 2004 (Burgundy, France) \$80: This star producer for white Burgundy is well known for making one of the best Bourgogne Blanc on the market, a wine that can compete with other producer's village wines. But this is a particularly excellent find in that this wine, which ages so well, is here offered with significant time in the bottle.

Reds

Jean-François Ganevat "J'en Veux!!!" Côtes du Jura Rouge 2010 (Jura, France) \$59: No wine label in the world is more hip at the moment than this one, and the demand for this bottle of red, from a variety of different grape types, is fierce. All the more surprising then to find it for this price.

Sylvain Cathiard Bourgogne Rouge 2007 (Burgundy, France) \$65: Sylvain Cathiard transformed his family's estate into one of the top wine producers in the region, and prices have escalated in recent years. With this wine you see what Sylvain was up to before his recent retirement, and for a particularly low markup.

Eric Texier "St-Julien en St-Alban" Vieille Serine Côtes-du-Rhone Rouge 2009 (Rhône Valley, France) \$69: With this vintage of this wine Eric Texier took the wine world by storm, making a strong argument for both the forgotten terroirs of the Rhône Valley and also the Serine type of Syrah. This vintage has long since sold out most everywhere else, and this is a great chance to try it.

You are okay with spending over \$100, but the wine has to be great:

Whites and Champagne

Vincent Dancer Chassagne-Montrachet La Romanee 1er Cru 2004 (Burgundy, France) \$150: Even among Burgundy fans, many people

in the States are not familiar with Vincent Dancer, who has been turning out excellent wines for several years now but has found uneven distribution. The La Romanee Cru is particularly good, and Dancer is particularly good with it. Enjoy this white Burgundy from a zippy vintage, which drinks as if it were twice this price.

Pierre Morey Meursault Les Perrieres 1er Cru 2001 (Burgundy, France) \$190: Pierre Morey was for many years the winemaker at the celebrated Domaine Leflaive, and was in fact also the winemaker there when he made this vintage of wine under his own label. Les Perrieres is a superb site for Meursault, one of the grandest, and Morey had a magic touch in 2001 in general. This wine is smokin' good.

Larmandier-Bernier Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut Champagne NV (Champagne, France) \$125: Now that Pierre Larmandier's fame as a producer of Champagne has taken off like a rocket, it is hard to find his wines for this price anymore. Here it is.

Jacques Selosse "Initial" Blanc de Blancs Brut Champagne NV (Champagne, France) \$195: Selosse for under \$200. Am I surprised to see this wine for this price? Sure I am. But even Halley's comet comes around every once in a while.

Reds

Ponsot Morey-Saint-Denis Rouge 1993 (Burgundy, France) \$110: Fully mature Ponsot from a vintage that needed the time. For only \$110. You really don't find opportunities like this one too often anymore, at least not in Manhattan.

Olga Raffault "Les Picasses" Chinon Rouge 1985 (Loire Valley, France) \$145: What once seemed like an endless stream of Olga back vintages seems finally to be running dry, as restaurants have gone through their stock. But here is the plush (in Olga terms) 1985 offered for a short markup. Developed, rustic Cabernet Franc that is perfect for winter drinking.

Brovia "Villero" Barolo 2000 (Piedmont, Italy) \$175: Give this wine a healthy decant, but my, what amazing aromatics this has. Brovia has done nothing but get better in the last two decades, and this wine is proof positive that the producer is one of Piemonte's stars.

Francois Bertheau Chambolle-Musigny Amourees 1er Cru 2001 (Burgundy, France) \$195: Excellent, mature Chambolle in an old school idiom that is getting harder and harder to find. Plus it is an Amourees. For under \$200 this is a steal.

