

# WHERE TO BUY WINE ONLINE

## The Top Eight Wine Ecommerce Sites for Unique and Interesting Wines

by Jeff LeVore



Being a wine lover in the state of Tennessee requires more than a little political acumen in Nashville and evolving state laws. Thankfully, we're making positive progress in having access to wines not just on the shelf, but also available online.

On June 4, 2009 wine lovers across Tennessee rejoiced when former Governor Phil Bredesen signed Senate Bill 1030 into law. Buying wine directly from a winery and having it shipped to your doorstep suddenly became a possibility. In May of this year, the entire state opened for winery shipping with the signing of Senate Bill 1030 making all counties "wet" for direct-to-consumer winery shipping.

Adjoining the issue of winery direct shipping is online wine retailer shipping which is a bit murkier subject. Online wine retailers generally caveat that all transactions take place in the state where they do business and provide shipping as a customer service, passing the legal responsibility of the receipt of wine onto the purchaser. The shipping companies like UPS and FedEx end up being complicit in the transaction provided the delivery is signed for by an adult 21 years of age or older.

The good news is that in addition to wineries, nearly all wine retailers ship to Tennessee.

Despite all of this newfound availability to buy wine online, sales still remain a very small percentage of overall wine sales for the wine industry, but that's changing, principally led by fast-growing "Flash" wine sites that offer one or two great wine deals a day (see [www.lat18.com](http://www.lat18.com)). This rising tide in online wine ecommerce is doing a whole lot of good for the future of online wine retailing and a number of proverbial boats will be lifted in the process.

Many of these boats will emerge from niches offering a personalized touch. Big online wine retailers and flash sites notwithstanding, the following is my top eight list of the most compelling niche wine sites (read: neither the biggest nor the cheapest, but driven by a passion for interesting wines with compelling service) to buy from this fall and holiday season, the guys (and gals) likely to benefit from growth in online wine sales.



### >> Tastingroom.com

What's to like: Utilizing a proprietary process, Tastingroom.com bottles and sells sample size wine from notable wineries in 50ml bottles, about the serving size of a pour at a winery tasting room. While that alone is novel, the real benefit is consumers have an opportunity to buy mixed sampler packs to try a number of different wines at home, at their leisure. Part of becoming a certified wine nut is the desire to taste wine more so than drink wine, satisfying an inveterate curiosity. This site lets you do exactly that, at extremely reasonable prices.  
Where to buy: [www.tastingroom.com](http://www.tastingroom.com)

### >> Plonk Wine Merchants

What's to like: Besides the elegantly designed, easy to navigate and information-rich web site, Plonk Wine Merchants is also a carefully curated selection of offbeat and affordable wines (all under \$30) from around the world. If you're an intrepid wine explorer who knows that Bonifas is Catalan Spanish for Grenache or that Blaufränkisch from Austria can be mighty tasty, then Plonk is for you. It's a bonus that the customer service is impeccable and owner Ely Lawenstein is a one-woman operation who will include a quick thank-you note complete with a smiley face with your shipment.  
Where to buy: [www.plonkwine.com](http://www.plonkwine.com)



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Where to buy: [www.tastingroom.com](http://www.tastingroom.com)

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