



Well-bred reds

In the second of her picks of the best festive wines, *Jancis Robinson* selects her top 25 reds

All these wines, culled from the 10,000 or so I taste each year, are thoroughly distinctive and superior, generally scoring 17/20, a very high mark on my scale. Unlike so much of the fine wine on sale, they are all ready to drink. Single bottle prices are given but you can often save money by buying an assorted dozen. Spain is on a roll; Italy's prices have softened.



Castaño, Heredad del Rey Selección

Reservada 2010 Yecla

Brilliant value from high altitude vineyards in the Spanish Levante. Old Monastrell (Mourvèdre) bushvines with 20% Syrah aged in American and French barrels of which only 20% were new. Light, sweet and lively. 13.5%
£8.94 to Jan 2 (then £8.99) Waitrose (260 branches)

Miramabelo 2010 Peza

Kotsifali and Mandilaria grapes grown on Crete give a hugely distinctive wine with the scents of dried laurel leaves and no excess sweetness. Bone-dry fine wine. Not that intense but complex, distinctive and interesting. 13%
£9.25 Oddbins

Baron de Ley, Tesco Finest

Viña Mara Gran Reserva 2004 Rioja
 Charm incarnate in this unusually venerable example. (Only the Spaniards mature their wines this long.) Dark crimson. Thick and sweet. Some really charming strawberry fruit and rioja structure. 13.5%
£10 until Jan 1 Tesco (540 stores); £15.99 Waitrose (until Jan 2)

Zugober, Betezos Crianza 2008 Rioja
 A family Rioja Alavesa outfit founded by Jerezanos in 1987. Sweet



strawberry fruit with real lift and freshness. Racy and transparent. Dry, appetising finish. 13.5%
£10.95 Corney & Barrow

Walter Clappis, The Hedonist

Shiraz 2010 McLaren Vale

Polished, fun, pure. Classic glossy Shiraz from South Australia's McLaren Vale. Spicy and not too potent. Dry finish. Biodynamically grown; attractively labelled. What's not to like? 14%
£12.99 Waitrose

Gerhard Markowitsch, Rubin

2010 Carnuntum

Full marks to Oddbins for having sourced special trademark Zweigelt (Rubin is Carnuntum's superior Zweigelt) in the cellar of one of Austria's many admired wine producers. Ripe, exuberant, almost rudely fruity but with an undertow of freshness and acidity. Mitteleuropa in a glass. Real bite. A much more interesting wine than you expect to meet on the high street. 13%
£13 Oddbins and £18 Nick Dobson

Louis-Claude Desvignes, La

Voite St-Vincent 2011 Morgon

Dense, ripe, well-knit Cru Beaujolais. Absurdly good value for drinking over the next four or five years. (Berry's Julien Sunier 2011 Fleurie is lighter, very flirtatious and more sensibly priced at £19.50 while its stunning Dom Jean-Marc Burgaud, Côte du Py 2011 Morgon splits the difference at £16.95.) 13%
£13.50 Berry Bros

Vignamaggio, Terre di Prenzano 2010

Chianti Classico

Pure, quite intense nose. Lots of savoury fruit here. So appetising! So long as you love Sangiovese, the Tuscan red wine grape, this



thoroughly authentic wine is for you. Another bargain from what some may see as an unlikely retail source. 14%
£13.50 Corney & Barrow

Daniel Boulard, Vieilles Vignes

2009 Morgon

Polish, substance and structure. Very impressive Cru Beaujolais with real attack. Luscious. Most Beaujolais from vintages 2009-2011 is seriously underpriced. 13.5%
£14.65 Vine Trail

Cordoliani 2006

Patrimonio

Made by young Romain Perfetti in his fourth year of operation from Niellucciu (Sangiovese) and Grenache, this (liquid) Corsican smells attractively of sweat and cumin powder – lots of personality. Lovely mature combo of fruit, rock and herbs with a really refreshing finish. 14%
£16.50 H2Vin £18 Vinoteca

West Cape Howe, Book Ends

Cabernet Sauvignon 2008

Great Southern
 Everyone in the Médoc should be made to taste this wine. It's so clean! Maybe just a teeniest tad too sweet for some palates but we are talking such slight nuances here. It is also wonderfully interesting and well balanced, admittedly from a perfect vintage for south Western Australia. 14%
£16.95 Jascots

Boekenhoutsloof, The Chocolate

Block 2011 Western Cape

Popular South African blend dominated by unirrigated Syrah from fashionable Swartland. Very sweet and opulent. A great, flattering palate massage. 14.5%
About £20 Berry Bros, Roberson, Slurrp, Waitrose (seven branches) and others

Montecano, Refugio Pinot

Noir 2010 Casablanca Valley

Made by André Ostertag of Alsace fame. Interesting aromas. None of the leanness of many Chilean Pinots and darker than most. Great to get your teeth into. Dry finish but juicy beforehand with plenty of crunchy fruit. 14%
About £20 Imbibros, Bottle Apostle, Green & Blue



Dom Françoise André 2009 Beaune
 Mid cherry red. Already quite mature on the nose. Very pure quintessential Beaune. Lots of fruit, the whole fruit and nothing but the fruit. Hint of raspberries but a dry finish. Cracking and racy. 12.5%
£20.85 Jascots

Cave de Tain, Tesco Finest

2007 Hermitage

Quite a treat to find a pure, luscious northern Rhône Syrah you could drink already in so many branches of a supermarket. The Tain co-op has access to a large proportion of the firm Syrah grown on this famous hill in the northern Rhône. Dry finish but great fruit on the way there. 13.5%
£20.99 Tesco (166 stores)

Wine & Soul, Pintas 2008 Douro

Excellent Portuguese red with years of life ahead. Very intense and schistous. Clean yet complex and ready to enjoy. 14.5%
£22.25 Corney & Barrow

Muga, Selección Especial

2006 Rioja

The Mugas have produced a classic blend, aged in casks they produce themselves. Dense, well balanced and vibrant. A reminder of how good rioja can be. 14%
£22.49 Waitrose (140 branches)

Poggio Bonelli, Riserva 2007

Chianti Classico

Almost sour nose and then lovely richness and appeal on the palate. There's a beginning, middle and end to this wine. Very resonant. 14%
£22.50 Lea & Sandeman

Les Songes de Magdeleine

2007 St-Émilion

The second wine of Grand Cru Classé Ch Magdeleine from the property's younger vines and lower slopes. Attractively scented with lots of evolution. Soft and gentle. If you like your right bank claret subtle, this is a bargain but no blockbuster. 13%
£22.95 Corney & Barrow and £23.55 DFR Wine

Marjan Sim i, Reserve Pinot Noir

2009 Brda

Hugely distinctive western Slovenian. Fun, rich-yet-dry and full of

personality. So different! Confident, long and pungent. 13.5%
£26.95 Bancroft

Francesco Rinaldi e Figli 2008 Barolo

Lots of integrity here. Great intensity and the potential to develop further although even now it is exciting and already broachable. 14%
About £34.50 Astrum

Dom Lignier-Michelot, En la Rue de

Vergey 2008 Morey-St-Denis

Very rich and sweet on the nose. Lively and quite sumptuous. Lovely combination of Morey's seduction plus freshness. Reverberant finish. This red burgundy works. 13%
£34.60 Jascots

Lefflaive & Associés, Premier

Cru Sur la Velle 2009 Monthélie

Rich red burgundy with notes of liquorice. Lots of energy and veracity in this pure, persistent wine. 13%
£35 Corney & Barrow

Ch La Grave à Pomerol

2004 Pomerol

Mid ruby. So sweet and meaty on the nose with masses of development. Only medium weight but knocks spots off most 2002 first growths at 10 times the price. 13%
£35.95 Corney & Barrow

Sottimano, Cottá 2008

Barbaresco

From the hands-off Andrea Sottimano in Piemontese. Introverted but convincing. Neat and persistent. You could enjoy this now or cellar it for any year. 14.5%
£41.50 Lea & Sandeman

For stockist details, go to www.ft.com/reds. More stockists at winesearcher.com.

Next week: Jancis's top 25 whites

FT Seasonal Appeal

Dine with an FT writer

To raise money for the Global Fund for Children, you can bid for a chance to lunch with Jancis Robinson and other FT writers (bidding ends December 10). From January, you can also bid for an eminent sommelier to inspect your wine collection. For terms and conditions, go to www.ft.com/sommelier

This Corsican wine smells attractively of sweat and cumin powder