

The better reds

In the first of our four-part guide to festive drinking, Jancis Robinson recommends delicious reds

I have concentrated on red wines that taste seriously delicious now and are well suited to festive fare. This selective list starts with the cheapest, from as little as £8.99 from one stockist, finishing with the most expensive (£65).

Vajra 2007 Dolcetto d'Alba
Pure Piemonte – burst of elderberries but overall quite delicate. 13.5%
£8.99 Booths, £13.99 Liberty Wines, £14.50 Harvey Nichols

Selvapiana 2006 Chianti Rufina
Refined, racy Chianti – as enlivening as a good argument. 13.5%
£10.99 Highbury Vintners, £11.95 Imbibros, £11.99 Wholefoods, £12 Harvey Nichols, £14 Nickolls & Perks, £14.50 Selfridges

Yann Chave 2005 Crozes-Hermitage
Much riper than the average Crozes from an excellent producer. Really delivers, and drinks well now. 13%
£11.95, Stone, Vine & Sun

Hecht & Bannier 2005 Saint Chinian
Thick, sweet and intense. Very polished ripe Syrah dominates. No hurry to drink. 13.5%
£12.95 Berry Bros & Rudd

Finca l'Argatà, Joan d'Anguera 2005 Montsant
Really interesting, very well melded, pretty chewy but full of life. A blend of Syrah, Grenache and Cabernet from this high, granite-dominated, Catalan zone. 14.5%
£12.95 Tanners

A to Z Pinot Noir 2006 Oregon
The best-value way to enjoy Oregon's specially subtle answer to Burgundy. Violet scents and a lovely texture. 13%
£14.25 Bibendum

Mas du Soleilla, Terre du Vent 2006 Vin de Pays des Coteaux de Narbonne
Merlot/Cabernet Franc blend with extremely well judged oak. Drink or keep. 14.5%
£14.95 Stone, Vine & Sun

Ch de Cerons, Grand Enclos 2005 Graves
Graves' depth on the nose

Very plush and flattering texture. Very easy to drink – really velvety – though with a dry finish. Drink or keep. 13.5%
£14.99 M&S

Isola e Olena 2006 Chianti Classico
Truly excellent this year – positively pulsates with life. Very, very good. 13.5%
£16.25 Nickolls & Perks, £16.99 Wholefoods, £16.99 Wimbledon Wine Cellar, £17.49 Highbury Vintners

Dom Trigan de Boisset 2004 Pomerol
Young Merlot from Christian Moueix's Ch La Grave à Pomerol vineyard. Meaty, beautifully made Pomerol with backbone.
£16.39 Corney & Barrow

Dom Roblet-Monnot 2002 Pommard
A lightweight Pommard just coming into its own. Vibrant fruit is refreshingly pure. 13%
£17.25 Domaine Direct

By Farr Pinot Noir 2005 Geelong
True, lively, delicate Australian grown from Burgundian clones in the cool south of Victoria. Fresh, racy with the merest hint of coffee. 13.5%
£18.95 Tanners

Fürst Centgrafenberg Spätburgunder Trocken 2006 Franken
The stunning quality of some German Pinot Noir is one of the wine world's best-kept secrets. 13.5%
£19.50 Waitrose Wine Direct and 3 branches

Dom Coche-Bizouard, Les Duressees Premier Cru 2005 Monthelle
Early-maturing 2005 red burgundies like this are just the ticket for the 2008 Christmas turkey. 13.5%
£19.95 Stone, Vine & Sun

Il Poggione 2003 Brunello di Montalcino
Great-value way to enjoy the roasted character of Sangiovese grapes in this heatwave vintage. Good introduction to the style. 14.5%

Clos de L'Oratoire des Papes 2001 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Irresistibly gorgeous – fully mature and exceedingly flattering. A great buy for current drinking. 13.5%
£19.99 Majestic

Ch d'Or et Gueules, La Bolidia 2006 Costières de Nîmes
Low yielding century-old Mourvèdre vines make this so much softer than Châteauneuf-du-Pape made across the Rhône. 14.5%
£21.10 Lay & Wheeler

Dom Alain Michelot, Vieilles Vignes 2001 Nuits-St-Georges
Super correct, and properly recognisable as a juicy Nuits. Good for wine students? 13%
£22 Domaine Direct

O Fournier, Alfa Crux Blend 2002 Mendoza
Lively blend based on old Tempranillo vines and a particularly creative new producer. 14%
£22 Waitrose

Bouza, A6 Las Violetas Tannat 2006 Canelones
Transparent, pure Uruguayan. Fragrant, unusually soft rendition of grape imported by Basque immigrants in the 19th century. 15%
£22.50 Great Western Wine

Dom Templer, Cuvée Tourtine 2003 Bandal
A&B Vintners sells the slightly sterner 2002 at the same price from this revitalised producer of Mourvèdre at its most interesting. Big and funky. Needs meat. 14.5%
£22.75 A&B Vintners, £24.95 Lea & Sandeman

La Rioja Alta, Gran Reserva 904 1995 Rioja
Unusually mature and delicate – a trip down memory lane for old Rioja lovers. Less in pounds than its equivalent was 10 years ago apparently! 12.5%
£25 Majestic Fine Wine, buy two and save £10

Ridge, Geyserville 2006 Sonoma County
Mellow field blend of

vines from one of California's most dependable winemaking teams. 14.5%
£26 The Wine Society, £27.95 BBR, £28.95 Imbibros

Dom Thierry Mortet 2005 Gevrey Chambertin
Spicy, firm with a beginning, middle and end. Dry savoury finish. Correct. Very persistent. 13%
£26.95 Lea & Sandeman

Poderi Luigi Einaudi 1999 Barolo
Classic smoke and tar with quite enough juice to satisfy and intrigue. Maturing nicely. 14%
£27.50 Lea & Sandeman

Castello di Ama 2005 Chianti Classico
This year this estimable producer has put everything, including the finest fruit, into this Tuscan classic.

13%
£27.75 BBR

Dom Clusel-Roch 2003 Côte Rôtie
Fine wine in both senses spreads nicely across the palate. 13.5%
£29.50 Lea & Sandeman

Ch Sociando-Mallet 2000 Haut-Médoc
Very serious classic claret to savour or cellar. 12.5%
£40 Majestic Fine Wine

Ch La Tour Haut-Brion 2000 Pessac-Léognan
This showed beautifully for current drinking in a tasting of 2000s recently. From a now-extinct property 13.5%
£42.50 Four Walls

Dom des Lambrays 2004 Clos des Lambrays
Usefully forward grand cru red burgundy. Sweet fruit and really very winning autumnal flavours. 13.5%
£49 Goedhuis

Finca Allende, Calvario 2004 Rioja
Spicy, full and rich with real depths of tobacco leaf flavour. The oak management is superb. It's expensive, but extremely fine. 14%
£65 BBR

See www.winesearcher.com for international stockists and www.jancisrobinson.com for more detailed tasting

Stockists

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wimbledonwinecellar.com

MORE RED WINES

For an extended list of more than 60 reds that Jancis Robinson has chosen for the festive season go to www.ft.com/christmas

