

Five of the best

9 Dec 2002 by JR

We have a new editor at the *Weekend FT* who has just started but promised to shake things up quite a bit. At very short notice she asked us correspondents to nominate five best from our chosen fields. Here's what I submitted, although I keep thinking of other wines I should have included.

Being asked to nominate the five best wines I have tasted this year is almost as bad as being asked, as I frequently am, what is the best wine I have ever tasted. I have devised an answer to this last question (a particular magnum of Château Cheval Blanc 1947 drunk in Burgundy in 1994, though different bottles of the wine have disappointed me since) but in truth there are no absolutes in wine. There is just the jaw-dropping variety this fermented juice of a single fruit can manage, and the sometimes frustrating variability between different bottles and different tasting occasions.

I am conscious that I am thoroughly spoilt in terms of the wines I am lucky enough to taste, and occasionally - good heavens - even drink. Perhaps I should have included some cheap and cheerful bottles (Concha y Toro's Lot 32 Winemaker's Reserve Malbec 2001, available only from the British Oddbins chain for just £5.99 from just after Christmas, springs to mind). But as exceptionally fine value as this Chilean essence of wild loganberries is, and as fine as many a non-French wine is nowadays, when it comes to greatness, France is still impossible to beat for the sheer number and variety of candidates it can field.

I have somehow whittled them down to five, doubtless only by overlooking many equally fine, or even finer, bottles that have come my way this year. All of them are relatively rare and all except the burgundies are fully mature. They are therefore difficult to find, and the Montrachet has not even been released yet. I apologise, but [WineSearcher](#) (with which I have no commercial relationship whatsoever) can, amazingly, locate international stockists and prices for all the others - including an almost incredible number of Californian stockists of various sizes of Lafite '59. *Caveat emptor*. Regular bottles of this treasure start at just under one thousand pounds. The Riesling and the red burgundy are about a hundred.

- Château Lafite 1959, Pauillac (red bordeaux)
- Le Montrachet 2000 Domaine de la Romanée Conti (white burgundy)
- Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses 1995 Domaine Roumier (red burgundy)
- Clos Ste Hune Riesling 1990 Trimbach (Alsace white, currently on sale from [Handford Wines](#) at £99)
- Dom Pérignon Oenothèque 1964 (champagne)