

Les Douze 2001 Fitou

3 May 2004 by JR

I had been planning a lovely summery white this week but Europe is so miserably cold, wet and almost wintry that I feel a dense, warming red that is very obviously the produce of a wonderfully hot summer is miles more appropriate. (Apologies to those of you reading this in sultry Bangkok or Bangalore.)

This is an entirely new wine from one of the most enterprising, and well- situated, co- ops in France, Les Producteurs de Mont Tauch in the village of Tuchan, high in the rugged hills of the southern Corbières in Cathar castle country. This is not one of the sleepy wine producers entirely out of touch with international consumers that are compromising France's future as a wine exporter (see [France discovers non- French wine](#) in purple prose).

In fact this very wine was dreamt up specifically to appeal to Mont Tauch's most important export market, the UK. The packaging is modern and stylish and the concept (you have to have a concept at this price level) is presumably that it will appeal to sports- loving wine drinkers. It's a blend, supposedly, of the best lots of the local grapes Carignan, Grenache and Syrah, from 12 (*douze*) particularly good growers who supply the co- op. Each of their names is listed down the long dark label, as though they are team members. Thus, we travel down the bottle from Michael (mysteriously not Michel) to Jean- Luc.

But what really matters of course is what's inside the bottle. To me this is a sort of poor man's version of the impressive, and deeply terroir- driven wines produced just a few miles south west of Tuchan in the upper Agly valley around Maury which I described in detail in [wine news](#) last year. Schist is the dominant soil type in both and this is precisely the sort of wine that has no need of oak.

I was impressed by how much depth of flavour there is in the 2001 - a marvellous vintage throughout southern France which in this case is already showing a little attractive bottle age - not often delivered for under six pounds. (Beware, however, that Majestic's summer list mentions '2001/02'. I have not tasted the 2002.)

In Britain Sainsbury's have been selling this for £5.99 but from today until the end of August Majestic are offering it at £5.49 if two bottles are bought.

(Indeed for the whole of this 04 may-30 aug period, Majestic is offering 15 per cent off any two bottles of Italian wine, which brings, for instance, Antinori's well crafted and very appealing Maremma blend **Guado al Tasso 1999** down from £45 a bottle to a reasonably competitive £38.25.)

The wine is also available in Sweden, Germany, Japan and Quebec where I see the monopoly in Quebec is offering this very same wine at well over 20 Canadian dollars a bottle which seems a bit steep. Thank you, wineseacher.com, for allowing such comparisons to be made.

