

UK Champagne deals

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Champagne prices have been falling rapidly as the market is awash with stock. Seckford Wines (www.seckfordwines.co.uk) of Suffolk is a fine wine trader which has been slashing the price of big name champagne to below high street prices, provided it is bought by the unmixed case. Carefully undercutting Oddbins and Majestic, Seckford can offer the sturdy Pol Roger White Foil at the equivalent of £15.35 a bottle (a real bargain) and the lively Taittinger at £15.95. Veuve Clicquot is £18.60 and both Bollinger and Louis Roederer non vintage at £19.49.

The estimable London merchants Lea & Sandeman (tel 020 7244 0522) are steaming through their stocks of non vintage Laurent Perrier imported in December 1997 by the Corporation of London and sold back to Laurent Perrier when last New Year's Eve's celebrations turned out to be more abstemious than expected. The last few cases of a dozen bottles are available at the equivalent of £16.95 a bottle. Laurent Perrier is one of the more consistent champagne houses, and this wine has the benefit of all that extra bottle age.

Another good buy for those who seek finesse rather than fame in a champagne is a case of the grand cru Egly-Ouriet at £200 (the equivalent of £16.67 a bottle) from La Vigneronne of London SW7.

Meanwhile, the supermarkets have been doing their best to outdo each other with their offers at the bottom end of the champagne market. Marks & Spencer's Oudinot Brut is reduced from £13.99 to £9.99 a bottle. From the same stable as Beaumet and Jeanmaire, this is certainly not great wine, but is a pretty good drink for this price. (M&S claim to sell 12 per cent of all champagne bought off the shelf in the UK, as opposed to just five per cent of still wines.)