Three (non-Burgundian) 2006 Pinots

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This wine actually says Spätburgunder on the label rather than Pinot Noir because of course it is German (just – see below) but I thought I would try to hook more interest by flagrantly using the sexier French name for this fashionable grape variety.

I managed to taste all the wines shown at last night's Wine Barn tasting in London and was thrilled to taste the wines of two excellent growers in particular, one of whom was completely new to me, Göttelmann of the Nahe whose **Göttelmann, Münsterer Pittersberg Riesling Kabinett trocken 2007 Nahe** at £9.69 a bottle promises well for the crystalline qualities of the latest vintage.

Friedrich Becker of Schweigen is famous in Germany for the quality of his red wines but they are difficult to find outside Germany. This is why we need enthusiastic specialist importers such as Iris Ellmann of The Wine Barn. Becker's vineyards are right on the border with Alsace, in fact some of the Pinot vines whose produce goes into his Sankt Paul Grosses Gewächs bottling (the 2006 is £44.35 a bottle from Wine Barn – ouch) are actually in France but the authorities allow him to label the wine as though it were all-German. Best value of the Becker offerings is the unoaked **Friedrich Becker, Spätburgunder QbA 2006 Pfalz,** £12.30 a bottle from Wine Barn, which would serve as a textbook example of Pinot Noir fruit for any wine student. It was fermented quite cool and clearly quite a bit of colour and flavour has been extracted but it's still gentle rather than tough and has a wonderfully pure expression of the sort of cherry/raspberry flavours of unoaked young Pinot with real freshness and delicacy. With just 12.5% alcohol, it compares favourably with any Bourgogne Rouge at the same price. Visit the Becker website and find out about the operation pictured below here.

For those who just can't get their heads round the idea that, thanks to climate change, Germany can make very decent red wines nowadays, or those on a tighter budget, I suggest **Bouchard Ainé Pinot Noir 2006 Vin de Pays d'Oc** which is £5.99 at Sainsbury's. This wine, made by the Burgundian negociant from fruit grown in the hills of Limoux which also produce very fine Chardonnay, has a very slightly stewed fruit nose but refreshing (though not excessive) acidity and some attractive ripe fruit too. There is a virtual tide of inexpensive French Pinot hitting our shelves now, including several rather stringy examples from Corsica of all places, but this one is superior.

Mind you, **Tesco Finest Yarra Valley Pinot Noir 2006** at £12.99 is even more superior, and more expensively made in one of Australia's cooler corners with proper, classical French oak ageing by De Bortoli's Steve Webber.

Find the Becker wine or order it from The Wine Barn