

Majestic - what to buy and what to avoid

28 Apr 2008 by JR

Since my report in March on a tasting of [Tesco's current offerings](#) seemed popular, I thought I'd share my impressions of a representative selection of the wines currently on offer from Britain's most successful specialist wine retailer, Majestic. This is a chain of so-called wine warehouses – large sites which customers can in general park outside (the fatal failing of most high street wine stores). Minimum order is a dozen mixed bottles, which has helped Majestic notch up consistently impressive financial results. The company has also replaced Oddbins as most popular trainer of young people in the UK wine business.

Overall, Majestic is pretty consistent, with most branches stocking most lines – although their handful of Fine Wine stores (St John's Wood in London NW8 being a flagship) have a much wider selection of seriously fine wines. They have long been one of the easiest places to find mature red bordeaux and report that this policy is now paying off with signs that these wines are selling increasingly well. They are also relatively serious about burgundy. Energetic bargain hunters can save the UK duty of around £1.50 a bottle by crossing the Channel to buy at their [branch in Calais](#).

I have marked with a * those wines that stood out for me at the end of the tasting.

Wines are listed in the categories used by Majestic since some of the offers refer to countries or regions rather than just to the wines described below.

All the offers mentioned in italics below run from 6 May to 28 Jul.

ITALIAN WINES

Buy any 2 Italian wines save 20% (excludes cork, sparkling wines and wines at £2.99 or below). Italian Tasting Week in all stores 6–12 June 2008.

Carlini Rosso Brunelleschi da Brugnato, Pinot Grigio Superiore 2007 Sangone 14.5 Drink 2008

Strangely industrial nose. Very arrogant palate though at least there is some fruit in the middle, but it's a sad fact that you can still do anything with Pinot Grigio on the shelf at the moment. 12/20.

*£2.49 Buy any 2 Italian wines save 20% 24/5**

Setness, Fiano di Sicilia 2007 107 Sicily 15.5 Drink 2008

Rich, peachy nose with good acidity on the palate – somehow reminiscent of yellow English mustard. A first for me to find this aroma in a white. Lots of character for the money. Tesco Finesse Fiano at £2.99 comes from the same source but has half a degree more alcohol. I approved my tasting notes on 1 bottle for your interest. 12%.

*£2.99 Buy any 2 Italian wines save 20% 24/5**

Tesco Finesse Fiano 2007 107 Sicily 15 Drink 2008

Slightly interesting ACS mineral nose and then Sicilian sunshine. Lots of breadth. £1 cheaper this would be the bargain of the year... Pretty good home-grown treasure anyway – a good example of how broad the retail range on offer in the UK has become. See the number of stores (7 in 12, 2% £2.99 7/17)

La Lancelotta 2007 Gew 11 Drink 2008

Very attractively, floridly scented. But a bit hard and pharosic on the finish unfortunately. Shame. 12%.

£7.49 Buy any 2 bottles wine save 20% £5.99

Morco Pareds, Cansado 2007 Branco Anada 11.5 Drink 2008-09

Intense aroma of some liquid soap. Lots of fruit and slight prickle. Pretty refreshing. Pretty cheery and but impressively long. 12%

£5.99 Buy any 2 bottles wine save 20% £7.99

*Yema 2006 Sabor Clavelo 17 Drink 2008-09

Lovely berry nose with real fruit on the mid palate. Great intensity of fruit with no sacrifice of delicacy or refreshment value. Seriously good wine – perhaps a little less tight than Penedas's. 12.5%

£12.49 Buy any 2 bottles wine save 20% £9.99

(See [more of this wine](#))

Faults de San Gregorio Palenquina 2007 Campana 10 Drink 2008

Natty nose – some minerals. Round and full – tastes more than 12% alcohol – with green apple hints. Not bad at all. Quite long. 13%

£5.99 Buy any 2 bottles wine save 20% £7.99

LOIRE WHITES

Loire Tasting Week in all stores 9-15 May 2008

Dom de Sahard, Le Vieux Clos 2007 Chenery 15.5 Drink 2008

85% Sauvignon Blanc, 15% Chenery. Water white. A little reduced and pretty stinky Sauvignon but certainly light and refreshing. At this stage a bit austere though it tastes as though it may be more mellow by August. 12%

£7.49 Buy 2 bottles save £1 £5.99

Caves de Pouilly-Fumé-Laire, Les Coccadilles 2007 Pouilly-Fumé 15 Drink 2008

Intense and very dry. Quite hard work but bracing! 12.5%

£5.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4 £7.99

Jean Pabst, Prestige des Vins Coteaux 2006 Pouilly-Fumé 15.5 Drink up

Light and very fresh and pretty pure but I'd drink this fairly soon. 12%

£12.99

Dom Yacheron 2007 Saccarre 15 Drink 2008

£14.99

Wine white. Fresh and correct but not especially intense. Sauvignon. 12%

Dom Yacheros, Les Romains 2006 Sancerre 16 Drink 2008-09

Mildly and delicate – worth the premium on the regular bottling even though the price is really pretty high. Fine and lovely texture – green fruits and succulence. 12%

£22.00

La Grille Chevillon Blanc 2007 Argis 15.5 Drink 2008-09

Made by Gumbault-Guillard. Very correct honey and flowers super clean nose with lots of fruit and just the merest suggestion of low temperature fermentation pineapple aromas. Great crystal clear acidity. Should last for more than a year. 11% GV

£5.99 Buy 2 bottles save £7.04 99

Dom des Gaudeliers 2007 Jambières 10 Drink 2008-10

Fine but not as exciting or electric as some. 12%

£7.99

FRENCH REGIONAL WINES

Terrasse de la Mer 2007 Picpoul de Pinet 14.5 Drink 2008

Pretty fierce acidity. Best drunk there... 12.5%

£5.99

Sansac Sauvignon 2007 Vin de Pays des Cotees du Tarn 14 Drink 2008

Light and a bit weedy and metallic. Ok but too much. 12%

£5.99 Buy 2 bottles save £7.04 99

Dom Castel Val, Cuvée Première Sauvignon Sur Lie 2007 Vin de Pays dOC 15 Drink 2008

Everyone doing Sauvignon Blanc? Good before even if not the purest, modest SB. A little heavy. 12%

£5.99 Buy 2 bottles save £7.04 99

Paul Max Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2007 Vin de Pays dOC 14.5 Drink 2008

Not much SB character on the nose and a bit heavy and oily. 13.5%

£7.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4.00.00

Clos d'Yvoire, Prieuré de Cîteaux 2007 Burgundy Sec. 14.5 Drink 2009-10

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon, 20% Muscadelle. Quite complex rich nose with real interest. Tangy blend – maybe the Muscadelle adds a rich green grape note? Deep Reserved Long GV 13.5%

£7.99 Buy 2 bottles save £1 £7.49

Don Paul Mire, Vignes de Nuits Charbonney-Vogrier 2007 Vin de Pays dOC 15 Drink 2008

60% Chardonnay, 40% Vinograd. Quite big and heavy – as though more than 12.5%. Slightly bitter finish. Not the most exciting example of the blend – needs a little more tension and depth. 13.5%

£2.49

Ch. Ste-Marguerite 2007 CÔtes de Provence 15.5 Drink 2008

Clear glass and a hint of pink honey colour. Very polished. Pretty big. Solid. Not the finest feature. 12.5% Organic

£3.99

Don Die-Rose, La Nall Blanche Rousseau 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes de Thongee 16 Drink 2008-09

Exciting herbal nose – quite a bouquet. Very slightly heavy on the palate. Oak stands out very slightly but it may well settle down... 13.2%

£3.99 Buy 2 bottles save £2.00.00

WHITE BURGUNDY

Louis Jadot 2007 Mezzacorona 15.5 Drink 2009

Light and fresh and saucy. A bit chewy on the finish still. What a white. 13%

£3.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4.00.00

Don Cordier, Terroir de Chénay 2007 Meun 16.5 Drink 2009-10

Clean and with fruit, off dry but great value! Some real intensity and lots of green fruit and freshness. Hint of minerality. Not a bad buy at all – lots of backbone. Still very young though, note my suggested drinking date. 13.5%

£3.99 Buy any 2 Cordier wines save £2.00

Christophe Cordier, Vieilles Vignes 2007 Vin de France 16.5 Drink 2009-10

Clean fruits and some food notes on the nose. True wine with integrity though a bit austere at present. 13.5%

£12.99 Buy any 2 Cordon roses wine £2 £11.99

Jean-Louis Chery 2006 Puligny-Montrachet 10 Drink 2008-10

A bit really on the nose but good vibrant richness on the palate. Not a silly price. Could be useful. 12%

£19.99 Limited Release Allocation

Dom Janin, Les Robert Premier Cru 2005 Puligny-Montrachet 15.5 Drink 2007-11

Fruit just a little tired. 770m the nose though there is nice sweetness on the palate. And quite a bit of alcohol! Not bad. You could probably find better value elsewhere but in extreme this would not be a bad choice. 13.2%

£20.00

SPANISH WHITES

*La Serrana Manchego 2007 Cariñena 15.5 Drink 2008

From Terra of Zaragoza. Fantastic value. Lots of fruit and very clean and fresh. Sourcing probably helps but really good for the money! 13% GV

£3.35

Crego e Monaguillo Godello 2007 Monreal 10 Drink 2008-09

Not bad - smooth and green but not desperately juicy or aromatic. 13%

£8.99 Buy 2 bottles save £3.07 £6

CHILEAN WHITES

Buy any 2 Chilean whites save 20% Chilean Tasting Week in all stores 23-25 May 2008

Castillo de Molina Sauvignon Blanc 2007 Elqui Valley 77

**Sulfur reduction problem! 13.5% Scorecap

£7.49 Buy any 2 Chilean whites save 20% £5.99

*Errazuriz, Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2007 Casablanca Valley 10 Drink 2008

Very fresh, clean fruit with delicacy and not too much pungency or residual sugar. Good delicate bracing easy refresher. 13.0% Scorecap

CS 89 Buy any 2 Chateau wines save 20% £7.99

Casa Maru, Cypress Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2007 San Antonio Valley 16 Drink 2008-09

Richer aromatically than the Empress. Look there – seems more successful and refined than the best lot of Casa Maru (2006/7)? I suspect. Still a little pinched on the finish. Maybe give this a few months? 14.5% Screwcap

CS 49 Buy any 2 Chateau wines save 20% £9.99

Whisperer Lot, Llanuras de Caramela Lot 7 Chardonnay 2007 Livera Valley 7?

Not much nose and a bit chunky – dark mineralish? – on the palate. 14%

CS 99 Buy any 2 Chateau wines save 20% £5.99

Cerro San, Valon Riesling Block Outbraken 2007 Bio-Bio Valley 15.5 Drink 2009-09

High alcohol for a Riesling? The back label (low volcanic, iron, red clay and that on the most curious of readings) Adolfo Humboldt's lady in the far south of Chile. Does smell like (young) Riesling. Maybe very slightly too sweet? Or perhaps it needs this for the acid? It's still a little touch-on-let but I'm sure it will get there. It's certainly not that expensive. Looking forward to see those when age. 14% Screwcap

CS 49 Buy any 2 Chateau wines save 20% £5.99

Cerro San, Valon Gewürztraminer Block Las Colinas 2007 Casablanca Valley 16 Drink 2008

The nose of this seems a bit more convincing than the Riesling. Lushes and heady dry and confident on the palate. I'd like to see very slightly more intensity – have you? 13.5% Screwcap OK

CS 49 Buy any 2 Chateau wines save 20% £5.99

ALSACE WINTERS

Philippe Zick, Riesling Etchberg 2006 Alsace 15 Drink 2008-10

A little too pinched and austere for comfort. 12.5% Screwcap

CS 19.99

Philippe Zick, Gewürztraminer Etchberg 2006 Alsace 15.5 Drink 2008-09

Rich, but broad. A little too sweet for comfort. 12% Screwcap

CS 19.99

ROSE

Ch. Cuvée Vieil, Vallée de la Vigne 2007 St-Chinian 10 Drink 2008

Dark, crunchy, Cinsaut. Some herby interest. Good delivery of texture -- real full there and the acid balance is right. Not too sweet and not painfully tart. Well done! 12%

£5.49 Buy 2 bottles save £2.05-49

Ch. de Vigne Bel-Air 2007 Bergerac 10.5 Drink 2008

By far the most interesting red of this lot -- full of ripe fruit but not sweet. Real lift and interest. A complete win. 12%

£7.99 Buy 2 bottles save £1.07-49

BEAUJOLAIS

Buy any 2 Beaujolais wines save 20%. Beaujolais Tasting Week in all stores 9-15 May 2008.

Georges Duboué 2005 Beaujolais-Villages 10 Drink 2008-09

Pretty but not good fresh fruit attack. 12.5%

£5.14 Buy any 2 Beaujolais wines save 20% £4.99

Ch. de Malbroux 2006 Beaujolais-Villages 14.5 Drink 2008

Not that pure -- seems a bit chequered up. 12.5%

£7.49 Buy any 2 Beaujolais wines save 20% £6.99

Ch. de Floty 2006 Morgon 10 Drink 2008-11

Dark crimson and punchy -- quite beefy. What if July before enjoying. 12.5%

£7.99 Buy any 2 Beaujolais wines save 20% £6.99

Louis Jadot 2007 Beaujolais-Landignol 10 Drink 2008-09

Pretty sweet and smooth. A good short-term drink with crunch and substance. 12.5%

£8.99 Buy any 2 Beaujolais wines save 20% £6.99

LOIRE REDS

Tasting Week in all stores 9-15 May 2008.

La Grille Pinot Noir 2005 St-Pourçain 11.5 Drink 2008

Pale, even slightly orange! Very very light and pretty soft – I think I'd enjoy it more if it were sold as a dark red, bolder enough. Drily acidic. 0/ 12%

£5.99 Buy 2 bottles save £2 £4.99

Charles Joguet, Les Cinq Cèpres 2007 Chicon 15 Drink 2009-10

Bright crimson. Pretty marked acidity but frank crunchy fruit. Slightly rearing. 12%

£3.99 Buy 2 bottles save £2 £3.99

Charles Joguet, Les Varennes du Grand Clos 2001 Chicon 15 Drink 2006-08

Great to find a wine with this much age on it at this price. Really developed nose – interesting, meaty, yet fragrant. Lots of chew and acidity. Bit of a cabbagy fruit drying out. 12.5%

£13.99

RED BURGUNDY

Cave des Trévins Côte de Nuits, Les Mouchottes 2006 Bourgogne Haut-Côte de Nuits 14.5 Drink 2007

Very light and soft indeed. I think I'd prefer La Grille. 12.5%

£3.99 Buy 2 bottles save £2 £3.99

Dom Malfard 2005 Sauvign-Les-Basses Rouge 10.5 Drink 2008-12

Healthy crimson. Sweet, well-mixed ripe nose. Very full-on. Coming into its own. Should not disappoint anyone. True, slightly rustic pure fruit with good structure. 12%

£15.99

Dom Pascal Lachaux, Vieilles Vignes 2004 Volney 10.5 Drink 2009-12

Looks quite evolved and pale. Very light nose. Sweet and gentle on the palate but with quite a bit of 2004 rigidity still. Not sure this will ever be super charming but should delight with the right food. 13.5%

£19.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4 £17.99

Pascal Lachaux Premier Cru 2001 Gernay-Chambertin 16 Drink 2008-12

Healthy ruby – not that dense. Light, evolved nose with a bit of dried leaves on the finish. Not vigorous. Some Gernay weight on the palate. Very chewy and but not quite enough fruit to counterbalance the tannins. A bit uncomfortably austere. Its days as a fruit bomb are certainly over! 13.5%

£23.99

NEW ZEALAND REDS

Covey Pinot Noir 2006 Marlborough 15 Drink 2008

Sweet nose and notably simple with a dry finish. What's the fuss? 14% Scorecap

£15.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4 £13.99

Quare Reef Pinot Noir 2006 Central Otago 16.5 Drink 2008-10

Intoxicating, succulent fruit – just slightly too much oak oak but certainly the valuest Pinot in this selection with some real perfume on the palate and interest and texture, rather much more, aromas on the nose. Long. Well made. 14.5% Scorecap

£15.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4 £13.99

FRENCH REGIONAL REDS

*Moussa, Roumestan 2004 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17 Drink 2008-12

70% Grenache Noir, 15% Carignan, 10% Mourvèdre, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Very ripe nose and then nice balance and interest on the palate. Firm, slightly mineral element runs through it but it's really quite refined. Well done! Very refreshing finish. Not cheap though. 13.5%

£17.99 Buy 2 bottles save £2 £14.99

RED BORDEAUX

Diane de Belgique 2005 Haut-Médoc 16 Drink 2008-11

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot. Already looks evoked at the rim. Nice round nose – all year 2005! A bit leaner than you might want from this vintage with the mezzanine of juicy notes. Relatively light weight but lots of pleasure for the money. 12.5%

£10.99

Les Hauts de L'Arche Haut-Bordeaux 2005 Pessac-Léognan 16 Drink 2007-09

50% Merlot, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. Very fresh and refreshing but. Well balanced with a certain suavity. Not a headbut drop – just a very good one for easy drinking. Only a slight burn on the finish. 07/12/07

£9.99

Ch. Geyssac 2005 Médoc 14.5 Drink 2007-09

80 simple and elegant for a 2005. Very angular and hollow. Diane de Belgique and Les Hauts de L'Arche Haut-Bordeaux are better value. 12%

£11.99 Buy 2 bottles save £4 £9.99

Ch Beauvillain 2003 St-Emilion 16.5 Orix 2007-08

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Single vintage. Sweet and full of plummy fruit. No excessive dried berries on the finish. Relatively succulent for a 2003 - good about term drinking and another sign of success in 2003 in St-Emilion. 12%

£17.99

CALIFORNIA RED

Esser Vineyards Merlot 2000 California 14.5 Orix 2008

Esser are based in American Canyon. Sweet and reasonably tart so not sickly but there's really not that much there in the middle. 13.5%

£5.49 Big 2 bottles save £2.00

CHAMPAGNE

Charles Heidsieck NV Champagne 16 Orix 2008

From CVM of Meilly. Lively and quite intense on the nose. Quite intense, not excessively green or sugar. Lively - good value at the lower price. Dense. An Espery on-up with a subtle treading on Etavelle. 12%

£29.99 Big 2 bottles save 20% £14.99