Ch de Pizay 2011 Beaujolais

27 May 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From €6.95, £6.99

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Yes, the Beaujolais season is upon us! The wines of this region are transformed. It is now relatively difficult to find the thin, sweet-and-sour rapid ferments that smelt of bananas, nail-varnish remover and bubble gum that characterised the wines when so many of them were made in the image of Beaujolais Nouveau. Nowadays Beaujolais is much more likely to smell like wine, albeit with the Gamay grape's appetising allure and playfulness.

Having enjoyed both the (relatively concentrated) 2009 and the more typical 2010 vintages of Beaujolais, I am looking forward to tasting a wide range of 2011s at the end of this month. Whatever conclusions I draw about the quality of the vintage overall, there is no getting away from the fact that Beaujolais is seriously undervalued. As outlined in What's so good about Beaujolais a couple of years ago, Beaujolais producers must be some of the least rapacious in the world.

Ch de Pizay 2011 Beaujolais is ridiculously cheap for the amount of pleasure it gives. You can find it for just €6.95 in France and Germany - and there's even a Belgian retailer who is offering this producer's 2011 Beaujolais-Villages, a step up from the straight Beaujolais, for €5.99. In the heavily-taxed UK, Majestic are offering the straight Beaujolais for £8.74 or £6.99 a bottle if at least two are bought. The 2011s don't yet seem to have reached beyond Europe however.

This crimson draught of summer is fresh and direct and with real Beaujolais character plus both refreshment and body. This is the sort of wine that is hugely versatile in terms of serving temperature. You can enjoy it at room temperature or you can stick it in the fridge and take it, heavily chilled, on a picnic. Alcohol is just 12.5%.

As you can see from the picture above left, the producer is not exactly the clichéd jovial *paysan* of the blue hills of Beaujolais. The Château de Pizay is a rather grand 19th-century pile with 80 hectares of vines - massive by Beaujolais standards - between Brouilly and Morgon. The place is nowadays a hotel, conference centre and spa (you know the sort of place) but its winemaking team do seem to be doing a good job - and presumably the amount of wine they have to sell helps to keep the prices down.

I also enjoyed **Ch de Pizay 2011 Morgon** which is a bit more concentrated and structured - instead of drinking it by next summer, I think you could hold on to this for another year - but it also has lots of frank, rumbustious fruit. It seems if anything even better value at Majestic with its regular price of £9.99 and just £7.99 if two bottles are bought.

Another delicious, more evolved and more artisanal Morgon is the very confident **Julien Sunier 2010 Morgon** which is chock full of personality and is £18.95 at Roberson.

Take advantage of these lovely wines, which could be just the job for Brits who have previously popped corks on English wines this Jubilee weekend celebrating our Queen's 60 years on the throne. See our latest recommendations of English fizz and English still wines.

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