25 under a tenner

20 Jun 2012 by Jancis Robinson/FT but this is longer

Although those who supply the UK's hugely competitive supermarkets have been under extreme pressure, not least because of continuous increases in duty, it is possible to find one or two almost incredibly good reds under £5 a bottle (perhaps helped by the weaker euro). White wines are more transparent and less forgiving and I have not been able to find any I could recommend to a serious wine lover at under £6.99 for 75cl - but I am proud of all the wines below, which show that specialist wine retailers can also offer some real value under £10. Wines are listed in ascending order of price per centilitre.

WHITES

Plaimont, Tesco Finest* Saint Mont 2010
Seriously distinctive blend of historic local Gascon varieties Gros Manseng, Petit Courbu and Arrufiac (see these details of how the vineyard, pictured below, from which they saved Arrufiac from extinction, has just been awarded protected status) from the excellent co-op that dominates wine production in Armagnac country. Dry but juicy and well structured. No hurry to drink this bargain. 13%
£6.99 Tesco

Origin Wine, Tesco Finest* Swartland Chenin Blanc 2011
Cult winemaker Adi Badenhorst advised on this blend of Chenin Blanc from South Africa's most fashionable recuperated wine region with a little Grenache Blanc, Clairette and Roussanne. Anodyne packaging 13.5%
£6.99 Tesco

Quintay, Berrys' Chilean Sauvignon Blanc 2011 Casablanca Valley
The Chileans are really giving the Kiwis a run for their money now. A piercing nose is followed by the electric buzz of bone-dry fruit with a hint of nettle sting about it. Clean finish though pretty light on the mid palate. 13%
£7.95 Berry Bros & Rudd

Rudi Rabl Grüner Veltliner 2010 Kamptal
Dull label but wonderfully intense herby perfume of Austria's signature grape. Dry but spicy. 12%
£7.99 Marks & Spencer

Casa Lluch Verdil 2010 Valencia
Really distinctive wine made from rare Verdil grape (it only just made it into *Wine Grapes*) grown at high altitude to produce a smoky, tense wine with broad lemon and lime fruit. 13%
£8 Oddbins

Luis Felipe Edwards, LFE Gran Reserva Chardonnay 2011 Casablanca Valley
Sweet in a vaguely butterscotch way but also fresh, thanks to cool drift up this Chilean valley off the Pacific. Concentrated, a very easy drink to like. Some of the fruit was aged in barrique so the price is excellent. Very persistent indeed. 14%
£8.74 Majestic

Jordan, Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2011 Stellenbosch
Very lively and flirtatious. More transparent and racy than many South African Chenins. Although there is some light green apple and honey flavour, there is no sweetness. Admirable grip on the palate. 14%
£8.75 The Wine Society

Dom de la Perrière, La Petite Perrière Sauvignon Blanc 2011 Vin de France
This wine from Sancerre is so full and ripe that it's almost unrecognisable as a French Sauvignon Blanc, but it's a good-value blackcurrant-leaf flavoured drink. 12.5%
£8.95 Roberson

Barbadillo, Tesco Finest* Manzanilla
Barbadillo specialise in this lightest, palest, driest, most appetising style of sherry of all. The sample I tasted was tingling fresh and superlative value. Saves paying Ryanair to fly you to Jerez! 15%
£5.99 for 50cl Tesco

Stefan Ehlen Riesling Feinherb 2008 Mosel
Pretty awful label but a great buy that has off-dry pungent slatiness and considerable evolution. This would make a comfortable aperitif or a good accompaniment to some Asian dishes. 11%
£9.90 The Sampler

ValdeSil, Montenovo Godello 2010 Valdeorras
Forget Albariño. Godello is the hot new north-west Spanish grape variety with great class. This is far from the finest example but it still knocked spots off Majestic' Mâconnais whites at the same price. Cool but firm and with obvious inherent nobility. 12.5%
£9.99 (2 bottles at £7.99 each) Majestic

Royal Tokaji, Dry Furmint 2010 Tokaj
This dry version of Hungary's most famous wine is not quite ready yet (the 2009 is drinking beautifully now) but is a particularly good price. Buy to drink from November? 13.5%
£9.99 (2 bottles at £8.49 each) Majestic

McWilliam's, Isabelle Mount Pleasant Chardonnay 2011 Tumbarumba
Still very youthful new wave Australian challenge to white burgundy from an irresistibly named high-altitude wine region in New South Wales with real potential for development. 13%
£9.99 Waitrose

Bootstraps Chardonnay 2010 Eden Valley
Australian wine scientist Peter Leske has fashioned this very restrained, racy, authentic wine for a label owned by Scottish importers Alliance Wine. It should keep well under its screwcap. 14.5%
£9.99 Sainsbury's

REDS

El Guia Tinto 2011 Campo de Borja
This northern Spanish region is the most wonderful source of rich red wine value currently, thanks to its stocks of low-yielding Garnacha bushvines. The Borsao bodega is responsible for this ridiculously underpriced wine, a new addition to the Waitrose range that has far more fruit and exuberant appeal than their previous basic Spanish red. Tesco's slightly heavier Gran Tesoro blend is £4.29. 13.5%
£3.99 Waitrose back next month (hope second shipment matches the first)

Pasquier Desvignes, House Beaujolais NV
New blend, new supplier in a relatively smart, screwcapped bottle. Light, fresh, frank. Simple but not too industrial. You could serve this lightly chilled; in fact treat it like a white wine in terms of serving and drinking. 12%
£4.49 Sainsbury's

Terso Rosso NV Puglia
Sweetish blend of 50% Nero di Troia, 30% Primitivo and 20% Montepulciano from the heel of Italy with a velvety texture. A barbecue wine? 12.5%
£4.79 Waitrose

Boutinot, Longue-Dog Red 2011 Vin de Pays d'Oc
A blend of Grenache with Syrah from the south western end of the Rhône Valley and a surprising amount of Côtes-du-Rhône-like flavour and impact for the money. Note that this new vintage will be on shelves only from mid August, and the current 2010 vintage is not exactly wagging its tail. 14%
£5.49 Sainsbury's

La Grille Pinot Noir 2010 Vin de France

This must be one of the cheapest Pinot Noirs anywhere, barring soupy counterparts from Romania. Wine broker Charles Sydney, who took the photograph of the relevant grapes above, put this together and bemoans the fact that the new appellation regulations for St-Pourçain in the northern foothills of the Massif Central demand at least 40% Gamay grapes in the blend so this strawberry-like 100% Pinot has to be sold as a geographically vague Vin de France. 12.5%
£6.99 (2 bottles at £5.99 each) Majestic

Cellier des Dauphins, Tesco Finest* Plan de Dieu 2011 Côtes du Rhône-Villages
Probably the best value of the southern Rhône package negotiated with a big supplier. Certainly a far better buy than the thin Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2010 at £16.99, and arguably twice as rich and satisfying as the basic Tesco Simply Côtes du Rhône 2011 at the thumbscrewed price of £3.79. Drink this spicy red blend of Grenache with Syrah and Mourvèdre any time over the next two or three years. 14%
£6.99 Tesco

Bodega Pirineos, *Tesco* Finest* Somontano 2010
From the Aragonese foothills of the Pyrenees, this novel blend showcases the perfumed local Moristel grape with Garnacha (called Grenache in France) and Syrah. Very aromatic with good structure and a dry finish. This is real wine at a bargain price, presumably because Somontano has no great reputation. 13.5%
£6.99 Tesco

Dominio Lasierpe, Taste the Difference Navarra Red 2010
Another northern Spanish bargain blend, in this case 54% Garnacha, 30% Graciano, and 16% Tempranillo unadorned by oak. The result is fresh, polished and cool. I'm not sure I can detect the Graciano but it's a nice idea to include a grape variety that was until recently on the verge of extinction. Appetising. 13.5%
£6.99 Sainsbury's

Porta Velha, Valle Pradinhos 2009 Trás-os-Montes
Just one of many bargains currently available from Portugal, in this case a juicy, quite delicate blend of Tinta Roriz (Spain's Tempranillo), Tinta Amarela and Portugal's signature Touriga Nacional grapes grown on a vinously revived noble estate in the mountainous north-east of the country.
£7.75 The Wine Society

Robert Sérol, Vieilles Vignes 2011 Côte Roannaise
Quintessential French country wine made from Gamay grapes. Lively and full of fruit with a rather stylish label, a silky texture and great persistence. Juicier than the average Beaujolais, it's good enough to be the Troisgros house wine. 12%
£7.95 The Wine Society

Vidal Fleury 2010 Côtes du Rhône
Rich nose. Vibrant, well-integrated and serious wine that is too dry to drink without food - it's quite pinched on the end - but it is proper artisan stuff from Guigal's sister company. Should last another three years. 14%
£9.99 (2 bottles at £6.99 each) Majestic

Dom des Garrigues 2011 Lirac
Syrah/Grenache/Mourvèdre blend that is much more appetising and succulent than the more expensive Abeille bottling. Maybe not for the long term but very juicy and spicy for current drinking. Good value at the two-bottle price. 13.5%
£9.99 (2 bottles at £7.99 each) Majestic

See also my recently recommended inexpensive red bordeaux.