

This year's top 100+ ☐ reds

7 Dec 2012 by Jancis Robinson/FT but this is longer

All these wines, culled from the 10,000 or so I taste each year, are thoroughly distinctive and superior, generally scoring 17/20, a very high mark on my scale. Unlike so much of the fine wine on sale, they are all ready to drink, too.

Single bottle prices are given but you can often save money by buying an assorted dozen. Spain is on a roll; Italy's prices have softened. Independent merchants can often offer better value than the big retailers for wines over about £10 a bottle.

Castaño, Heredad del Rey Selección Reservada 2010 Yecla

Brilliant value from high-altitude vineyards in the Spanish Levante. Old Monastrell (Mourvèdre) bushvines with 20% Syrah aged in American and French barrels of which only 20% were new. Light, sweet and lively. 13.5%
£6.94 until 2 Jan, usually £8.99 Waitrose (260 branches)

Mirabelo 2010 Peza

Kotsifali and Mandilaria grapes grown on Crete give a hugely distinctive wine with the scents of dried laurel leaves and no excess sweetness. Bone-dry fine wine. Not that intense but complex, distinctive and interesting. 13%
£9.25 Oddbins

Baron de Ley, Tesco Finest Viña Mara Gran Reserva 2004 Rioja

Charm incarnate in this unusually venerable example. (Only the Spaniards mature their wines this long.) Very dark crimson. Thick and sweet. Some really charming strawberry fruit and rioja structure. 14%
£10 until 1 Jan, usually £13.99 Tesco (540 stores)

Zugober, Belezos Crianza 2008 Rioja

A family Rioja Alavesa outfit founded by Jerezanos in 1987. Sweet strawberry fruit with real lift and freshness. Racy and transparent. Dry, appetising finish. 13.5%
£10.95 Corney & Barrow

Walter Clappis, The Hedonist Shiraz 2010 McLaren Vale

Polished, fun, pure. Classic glossy Shiraz from South Australia's McLaren Vale. Spicy and not too potent. Dry finish. Biodynamically grown; attractively labelled. What's not to like? 14%
£12.99 Waitrose

Gerhard Markowitsch, Rubin 2010 Carnuntum

Full marks to Oddbins for having sourced special trademark Zweigelt (Rubin is Carnuntum's superior Zweigelt) in the cellar of one of Austria's many admired wine producers. Ripe, exuberant, almost rudely fruity but with an undertow of freshness and acidity. Mitteleuropa in a glass. Real bite. A much more interesting wine than you expect to meet on the high street. 13%
£13 Oddbins

Louis-Claude Desvignes, La Voûte St-Vincent 2011 Morgon

Dense, ripe well-knit cru beaujolais. Absurdly good value for drinking over the next four or five years. (Berrys' [Julien Sunier 2011 Fleurie](#) is lighter, very flirtatious and more sensibly priced at £19.50 while their stunning [Dom Jean-Marc Burgaud, Côte du Py 2011 Morgon](#) splits the difference at £16.95.) 13%
£13.50 Berry Bros

Vignamaggio, Terre di Prenzano 2010 Chianti Classico

Pure, quite intense nose. Lots of savoury fruit here. So appetising! So long as you love Sangiovese, the Tuscan red wine grape, this thoroughly authentic wine is for you. Another bargain from what some may see as an unlikely retail source. 14%
£13.50 Corney & Barrow

Daniel Bouland, Vieilles Vignes 2009 Morgon

Polish, substance and structure. Very impressive cru beaujolais with real attack. Luscious. Most beaujolais from vintages 2009-2011 is seriously underpriced. 13.5%
£14.65 Vine Trail

Cordoliani 2006 Patrimonio

Made by young Romain Perfetti in his fourth year of operation from Niellucciu (Sangiovese) and Grenache, this (liquid) Corsican smells (attractively) of sweat and cumin powder - lots of personality. Lovely mature combo of fruit, rock and herbs with a really refreshing finish. 14%
£16.50 H2Vin, £18 Vinoteca

West Cape Howe, Book Ends Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 Great Southern

Everyone in the Médoc should be made to taste this wine. It's so clean! Maybe just a teeniest tad too sweet for some palates but we are talking such slight nuances here. It is also wonderfully interesting and well balanced, admittedly from a perfect vintage for south Western Australia. 14%
£16.95 Jascots

Boekenhoutskloof, The Chocolate Block 2011 Western Cape

Hugely popular South African blend dominated by unirrigated Syrah from fashionable Swartland. Very sweet and opulent. A great, flattering palate massage. 14.5%
About £20 Berry Bros, Roberson, Slurp, Waitrose (7 branches) and others

Montsecano, Refugio Pinot Noir 2010 Casablanca Valley

Made by André Ostertag of Alsace fame. Really interesting aromas. None of the leanness of many Chilean Pinots and darker than most. Something to get your teeth into. Dry finish but juicy beforehand with plenty of crunchy fruit. 14%
About £20 Imbibros, Bottle Apostle, Green & Blue

Dom Françoise André 2009 Beaune

From the recuperated Domaine des Terregelesses, made by Françoise and her daughter-in-law. Mid cherry red. Already quite mature on the nose. Very pure quintessential Beaune. Lots of fruit, the whole fruit and nothing but the fruit. Hint of raspberries but a dry finish. Crackling and racy. 12.3%
£20.85 Jascots

Cave de Tain, Tesco Finest 2007 Hermitage

Quite a treat to find a pure, luscious northern Rhône Syrah you could drink already in so many branches of a supermarket. But then the Tain co-op has access to a substantial proportion of the firm Syrah grown on this famous hill in the northern Rhône. Dry finish but great fruit on the way there. 13.5%
£20.99 Tesco (166 stores)

Lime Rock Pinot Noir 2009 Hawke's Bay

From Waipawa, an exciting new New Zealand region with Pinot-friendly limestone. Vines planted in 2000 include some Burgundian clones. Pale. Very flattering nose, medium weight and truly burgundian subtlety. 14.5%
£21 H2Vin, £22.75 Vinoteca, limited stock until early Jan

Joseph Swan, Mancini Ranch Zinfandel 2006 Russian River Valley

Current release of a wonderfully idiosyncratic wine. Dusty with real terroir integrity. Serious, quite diffuse wine that is not really that expensive considering its age and pedigree. Finishes dry and is nothing like the excessively jammy Zincarnations that proliferate. Great with rare roast beef, I would imagine. 15%
£21.50 The Wine Society, very limited stock

Wine & Soul, Pintas 2008 Douro

Excellent Portuguese red with years of life ahead. This smells of the Douro, all right! Very intense and schistous. Clean yet complex and ready to enjoy. 14.5%
£22.25 Corney & Barrow

Muga, Selección Especial 2006 Rioja

The Mugas have produced a classic blend, aged in casks they produce themselves. Dense, well balanced and vibrant. A reminder of how good rioja can be. 14%

£22.49 Waitrose (140 branches)

Poggio Bonelli, Riserva 2007 Chianti Classico

Almost sour nose and then lovely richness and appeal on the palate. There's a beginning, middle and end to this wine. Very resonant. 14%
£22.50 Lea & Sandeman

Les Songes de Magdelaine 2007 St-Émilion

The second wine of grand cru classé Ch Magdelaine that has just been absorbed into Ch Bélair-Monange (do keep up), from the property's younger vines and lower slopes. Attractively scented with lots of evolution. Soft and gentle. If you like your right-bank claret subtle, this is a bargain but it ain't no blockbuster. 13%
£22.95 Corney & Barrow

Marjan Simčič, Reserve Pinot Noir 2009 Brda

Hugely distinctive western Slovenian. Fun, rich-yet-dry and full of personality. So different! Confident, long and pungent. 13.5%
£26.95 Bancroft

Dom Lignier-Michelot, En la Rue de Vergey 2008 Morey-St-Denis

Very rich and sweet on the nose. Lively and quite sumptuous. Lovely combination of Morey's seduction plus freshness. Reverberant finish. This red burgundy works. 13%
£34.60 Jascots

Leflaive & Associés, Sur la Velle Premier Cru 2009 Monthelie

Rich red burgundy with notes of liquorice. Lots of energy and veracity in this pure and persistent wine. More 2009 than Monthelie. 13%
£35 Corney & Barrow

Francesco Rinaldi e Figli 2008 Barolo

Lots of integrity here. Great intensity and the potential to develop further although even now it is exciting and already broachable. 14%
£35-40 Astrum and various stockists

Ch La Grave à Pomerol 2004 Pomerol

Mid ruby. So sweet and meaty on the nose with masses of development. Sweet, edgy and rewarding. Only medium weight but knocks spots off most 2002 first growths at 10 times the price. 13%
£35.95 Corney & Barrow

Sottimano, Cottá 2008 Barbaresco

From the hands-off Andrea Sottimano in this increasingly confident Piemontese commune. Introvert but convincing. Neat, pure and persistent. You could enjoy this now or cellar it for many a year. 14.5%
£41.50 Lea & Sandeman

Monte Santoccio 2008 Amarone della Valpolicella

Made in his spare time by the famous Quintarelli's winemaker. Flavours of dried cherries and lots of life and energy. There is real nerve to this dried-grape wine. Much cheaper examples proliferate but this has great fruit and bite. Persistent. 16%
£44 Swig

Gaja, Dagromis 2007 Barolo

What a sign of the times that Gaja, who famously sells some of Italy's most ambitiously priced wines, is selling this blend from his vineyards in the villages of La Morra and Serralunga to M&S. Firm and fummy with liquorice and treacle. Aged in barriques then large oak. 14.5%
£50 Marks & Spencer (25 stores)

Ch Trotanoy 2001 Pomerol

Liquorice scented and gorgeously fleshy. Like many 2001s, it is cheaper but no worse than the 2000. Spicy red-pepper notes. Fresh and delightful. Such lift on the finish.

About £149 James Nicholson and KWM Wine, Northern Ireland

Ch Gruaud Larose 1982 St-Julien

A real treat for those seeking the most gratifying fully mature claret without paying first-growth prices. Note the alcohol level. Presumed 12%.

About £230 Four Walls Wine, Nicholls & Perks