

wines of November 2008

These might be wines that have been reviewed during the month on wine-pages, or have appeared in my magazine columns, or they may be wines from a recent tasting that hasn't yet been written-up in a full-length report. There is a growing archive of these *four of the best* choices each month.

under a fiver

Asda Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (Italy) 2007

A wine of the week at the start of November, chosen to show up the poor quality of new ranges of "super-budget" wines hitting the supermarkets at little more than £2 per bottle. This little Italian red has represented the previous low point (price-wise), available on the shelves for just £2.98. The truth is that precious few wines costing less than £3.00 would be suitable for 'wine of the week', but this is an exception: it is a light ruby colour, and a nosed of slightly spicy, red plum and cherry fruit. On the palate there is genuine personality here, and I have to say the fruit is excellent, with that slightly herbal edge and twist of typical Italian bitter cherry acidity to softer berry and plum flavours. It stays nicely balanced into the finish too, with soft tannins and a warming hint of earthy spice. Genuinely exceptional value this wine - there's no need to spend less... £2.98, Asda.

under a tenner

Marques de Riscal (Spain) Rueda 2007

A famous name of Rioja, though making this wine in the Spanish white-wine hotspot of Rueda. Though there's a lot of Sauvignon Blanc in the region, Verdejo is the main indigenous variety and indeed, makes up 100% of this wine. Verdejo shares many Sauvignon characteristics however, and the opening volley from this wine is a punch of grassy, nettly aroma and a big core of gooseberry and elderflower. There's a refined lime zestiness behind. On the palate that grassy, green fig and herbal character fills the mouth, but this has some weight and smoky minerality, and a the long, fresh, citrus finish makes it sharp as a tack and fish and shellfish-friendly. £6.99, Majestic, Sainsbury's.

under twenty

Oremus (Hungary) Tokaji Noble Late Harvest Furmint 2005

From an estate owned by Spain's Vega Sicilia, this has a fabulously toasty, buttery, smoky nose with deep, ripe nectarine fruit. The palate is flooded with ripe, unctuous, thickly-textured fruit. The palate is gorgous, with decisive yet broad acidity and has a real sense of buttery, smoky richness with sultana and very sweet fruit. Long and shimmering acidity extends the finish. £14.60 per 37.5cl, **Berry Bros & Rudd**, or £13.15 by the case. See all stockists on wine-searcher.com.

sky's the limit

Királyudvar (Hungary) Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos 2002

Ratcheting-up the Tokaji competition, this stunningly good example comes from the estate of

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Anthony Hwang, the Asian owner of Domaine Huet in Vouvray. It is a 70% Furmint and 30% Hárslevelü blend that spent 28 months in Hungarian barriques, with a further year in bottle before release. It has a fabulous toffee apple and lanolin nose, with wax and honey, and plenty of apricot depth and unctuous richness. Beautiful tangerine acidity and breathtaking balance on the palate with a flood of fruit and massive caramel richness. Scintillating stuff that will last forever. £45 - £50 for 50cl, Waitrose Canary Wharf, Kingston, www.waitrosewine.com, The Wine Society. See all stockists on wine-searcher.com.

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