

50 best red wines for summer

by Jane MacQuitty



From the perfect bottle for your barbecue to bargain burgundy and bordeaux, the Times wine critic has found the best wines to buy now

Under £6.50

Sicilian Rosso, Terre Siciliane, Italy

Tesco £4.19

Sicily is a wonderful source of sunny, cheap and cheerful reds. Even at this rock-bottom price, this sweet, juicy, richly perfumed, two-thirds nero d'avola red, topped up with shiraz, oozes the sort of fat, truffle, herb and prune-stashed fruit that will make it a crowd-pleaser. This jolly red loves salami and strong cheeses. Great value for money.



Weekend pullout

A vineyard in La Rioja, Spain

Malbec, Vignobles Roussellet, Vin de France

Aldi £4.39

France, not Argentina, was first with the malbec grape and Cahors, deep in the southwest, was its original home. Renowned for its black, burly reds, this Languedoc malbec has been sensibly tempered with a 15 per cent dollop of syrah. Just the ticket with a sizzling steak or grilled lamb chops.



2013 Zilzie Shiraz-Viognier, southeastern Australia
Asda £4.85

Wonderfully cheap 14 per cent alcohol, Aussie red. This beefy, burly rhône-inspired, bramble and liquorice-stashed 2013 is tailor-made for barbecue fare and the first game birds which will be on our plates in August.



2010 La Nonna Rioja Crianza, Spain

Tesco £4.99

A tasty 2010, from a good rioja vintage, that is made exclusively from the tempranillo grape. It bristles with the delicious truffle, leather and sandalwood scents so loved by rioja fans but with a more restrained spin. Lamb loves this.



2013 Extra Special Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Valley, Chile

Asda £5

Keep your eyes peeled at Asda: wine prices here go up and down like a yo-yo. Currently, this dazzling Chilean red is given away for a fiver but it won't stay this low for long. So if you fancy a terrific New World pinot noir, this gorgeous, plum and game-charged, surprisingly classic interpretation has your name on it.



2014 The Exquisite Collection Cabernet de Cabernet, Pays d'Oc, JC Mas, France

Aldi £5.99

Made from equal amounts of cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon, the combination is a mouthwatering red with masses of redcurrant and myrtle fruit to the fore, plus a delicious vanilla pod-spiced oak finish.



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Under £6.50

2012 Altos de Tamarón Crianza, Ribera del Duero, Spain

Lidl £5.99

Hats off to Lidl's buyers for snapping up this modern, mocha, vanilla and spiced plum-stashed red. Roasted red meats and strong cheeses love it.



2014 Winemakers' Selection Merlot, Pays d'Oc, France

Sainsbury's £6

Ignore Sainsbury's inexpensive Winemakers' Selection wines at your peril. Within this bargain-basement range are some simple, juicy, bang-on-the-money bottles. Merlot continues to be a much-loved, easy-swinging summer red.



2013 Côtes du Rhône Villages, Wm Morrison Specially Selected, France

Morrisons £6.49

Good, ordinary rhône reds have their place on the summer table too, as their cracked black-pepper spice makes a brilliant match with everything from lamb kebabs to barbecued burgers. Morrisons' Signature 2013, from a good rhône vintage, and chock-a-block with plums, cloves and vanilla, gets my vote.



2013 Golden State Cabernet Sauvignon, Lodi, California

Waitrose £6.49

If it's a staycation again this year, fly off to the golden state of California with this sunny, barbecue-friendly red, one of Waitrose's ace new own-label gems. Made exclusively from Lodi grapes, this is full of lush, mouthwatering, almost 14 per cent alcohol-charged fruit.



2012 Cigarra Tinto, Vinho Regional Lisboa, Portugal

Oddbins £6.50

The perfect Portuguese summer buffet party wine, made from a hotchpotch of varieties grown close to the coast north of Lisbon. This glorious black and red summer berry of a wine is tailor-made for cold beef and charcuterie.



Under £8

2012 Château Lary, Bordeaux, France

The Wine Society (01438 741177) £6.75

Good, ordinary, everyday-swinging, plump, plummy, merlot-based claret from a 170-acre property in the lesser Entre-deux-Mers region. Château Lary's 2012 is not the greatest bordeaux vintage, but way better than the years either side of it, and at this ridiculously low price, who's complaining?



2012 Aglianico del Vulture, Cantina di Venosa, Italy

Majestic 2 for £7.49 each (down from £9.99)

Italian reds, with their squirt of bitter cherry spice, make terrific warm-weather wines, especially this unusual, volcanic, fennel-scented red, which is perfect with everything from beef carpaccio to chicken wrapped in parma ham.



2013 Le P'tit Spencer, Château Spencer La Pujade, Corbières, France

Adnams (01502 727222) £7.49

Delicious spicy, black plum, garrigue herb and prune-stacked Languedoc red, so thick with fruit that it makes common-or-garden corbières taste like a rustic, surly southerner. It is a traditional southern carignan, mourvèdre, syrah and grenache mix.



2013 Côtes du Rhône Réserve, Famille Perrin, France

Booths £7.59 (down from £9.69) until August 11; Majestic £8.99, or 2 for £7.99 each until July 22

This rhône is a lip-smacking, black cherry-licked mix of sunny grenache from the Prébois vineyard in Orange, peppery syrah from farther north in Vinsobres and rugged mourvèdre. Drink with barbecued meat.



2014 Chinon, Le Logis de la Bouchardière, Serge et Bruno Sourdais, France

Lay & Wheeler (01473 313300) £7.86; Gauntleys of Nottingham (0115 911 0555) £9.40

Chinon, made from the Loire's crunchy, redcurranty summer pudding of a cabernet franc grape is a summer charmer, just like this one. Serve cool with charcuterie or warm goat's cheese salad.



Pinot Noir, Loron & Fils, Vin de France

Tanners (01743 234455) £7.95

Good red burgundy for less than £8 is extinct, so the next best thing is a nonvintage vin de France pinot noir – this one comes mostly from Auvergne, in the centre of France. Even burgundy snobs will lap up this lacy, gamey, red-berried pinot noir, with a whisker of spice on the finish.



2013 Segares Tempranillo Rioja, Bodegas Nestares Eguizábal, Spain

Stone, Vine & Sun (01962 712351) £7.95

Rioja rules, so scoop up this romping red. With palate-boggling, plump yet zesty fruit and a fine, young, spicy finish, Segares marries ancient and modern rioja with style.



2013 Thiasos Peloponnese, Greece

Wine Rack £7.99; Grape & Grain (01444 456217) £8.99

Greek reds have their place on the summer table as they make brilliant barbecue bottles and work equally well with all those punchy summer salads. Fermented in stainless steel and unoaked, this unusual red bristles with wild, floral, basil and thyme-scented fruit.



2014 Gaião, Vinho Regional Alentejano, Portugal

Wine Rack £7.99

Wine Rack is slowly becoming a wine emporium of note, brave enough to stock bottles that other high street outlets cannot be bothered with. Gaião, a mix of traditional Portuguese grapes pepped up with a dollop of peppery syrah, is a great 14 per cent example, all smouldering, exotic violets, currants and briary fruit with a firm, perfumed finish.



2013 Passione Sentimento Rosso, Veneto, Famiglia Pasqua, Italy

Majestic Wine 2 for £7.99 each (down from £11.99) until July 22; Morrisons £10.99

This dreamy red, made from partially dried grapes, has both concentration and complexity. Its bold, brooding, beefy, richly spiced fruit is just what's wanted with beef carpaccio.



Under £12

2012 Waikato River, Nelson Pinot Noir, New Zealand

Morrison's £7.99

Morrison's is another supermarket that is treating wine seriously and the range and quality here improve every year. This is a cracking, great-value Kiwi pinot noir with some glorious, vibrant, gamey, plum and strawberry-ripe fruit, with a tickle of spice.



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2013 Taste the Difference Pinot Noir, Aconcagua, Chile

Sainsbury's £8

Skint red burgundy lovers should consider Chile as well as New Zealand, as the juicy, fruit-filled pinot noirs here make an enticing summer treat. This fat, raspberry, mocha and creosote-spiced red is a delight and brings out the best in barbecued ribs.



23

2013 The Society's Exhibition Fleurie, France

Wine Society (01438 741177) £8.95

Make certain you are first in the queue for this beguilingly floral fleurie. It has masses of mouthwatering, fat, silky, plum, cherry and raspberry fruit, plus a terrific, refreshing zesty finish.



24

2013 The Society's Exhibition Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina

Wine Society £9.95

Enjoy this hefty, tannic, bitter black chocolate, woodsmoke and liquorice-laced red with a sizzling steak plus a spicy South American chimichurri sauce or chipotle chilli rub, when it will bring a smile to your face as it melts in your mouth.



25

2013 The Cubist Old Vine Garnacha, Calatayud, Spain

Waitrose £9.99

The combination of high, wild, windy, dry slate soil and nearly 100-year-old garnacha vineyards produce an extraordinarily rich, dark, dusky, concentrated 14.5 per cent alcohol red, with luscious, unoaked, mulberry and victoria plum fruit to the fore, plus a fine, burnt, burly finish.



26

2012 Taste the Difference Chateau Tanunda Basket Press Blend, Barossa, Australia

Sainsbury's £10

The old ways in hot, arid wine regions can – and do – produce some great wines, and this bordeaux-inspired red proves the point. A blend of cabernets sauvignon and franc, plus merlot, malbec and petit verdot, it bursts with beautiful, mouth-filling, velvety red-berry fruit.



27

2009 Chateau Vignol, Bordeaux, Famille Doublet, France

Erriarwood (020 7736 2628) £10.50

2009 was a great bordeaux vintage with some thrillingly rich, seductive clarets, and even this one, for not much more than a tenner, has plenty of class. Scoop up this claret, made from merlot and cabernet sauvignon, and oozing fine, floral, cedary, yet chewy, red meat-loving fruit that punches well above its weight.



28

2013 Monte Nero, Domaine Boucabeille, Côtes du Roussillon Villages, France

Justerini & Brooks (020 7484 6400) £11.46

I loved this rollicking grenache, pumped up with almost a third syrah, and as good as organic and biodynamic winemaking gets. It is crammed with dark-hearted, sensuous, silky, forest fruits.



29

2012 Mercurey, Domaine Marguerite Dupasquier, Burgundy, France

Asda £11.50

I have no idea how Asda managed to get hold of such a magnificent mercurey from this single 45-acre domaine, based in Rully at the northern end of the Côte Chalonnaise. This elegant, truffley, cherry and strawberry-laced, yet restrained, pinot noir is perfect with duck and milder game.



30

2006 Chateau Fonréaud, Llistrac-Médoc, Bordeaux, France

Ci-op £11.99

Fonréaud's lively, savoury-cedary fruit, with lovely balance and a fine, firm finish, makes a bang-on-the-money addition to the summer wine rack, and this tasty 2006 vintage is already starting to drink well.



31

Under £25

2012 Valpolicella Ripasso, Classico Superiore, Fratelli Recchia, Italy

Waitrose £11.99

"Waitrose In Partnership" wines such as this one with Fratelli Recchia, founded in 1906, are a great way of drinking some of the world's best wines, from top producers, at keen prices. This is a big, chunky, richly fruited, dried cranberry-stashed red displaying real Italian class and lineage.



32

2013 Chianti, Salcheto, Selfridges & Co, Italy

Selfridges £11.99

Selfridges' Italian wine range is the best of the big stores. So make certain you pick out this own-label Selfridges chianti, which is punchy, rosemary and thyme-scented – and very, very good.



33

2013 Russian Jack Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand

Majestic Wine 2 for £11.99 each (down from £15.99)

A juicy red and a classic example of just how tasty Martinborough pinot noirs can be. With masses of light, leafy, gamey fruit, lots of strawberry and cherry-ripe flavours to the fore, this red closes on a seductive whisper of mocha spice.



34

2014 Paul Cluver Ferricrete Pinot Noir, Elgin, South Africa

Marks & Spencer £12

This pinot noir comes from iron-rich "ferricrete" soil, which gives it an unusual and intriguing mineral spin. This impressive red oozes enticing, juicy, red-fruited charm and is perfect with lamb.



35

2012 Monteleccio, Sesti, Castello di Argiano, Montalcino, Italy

Goedhuys (020 7793 7900) £12.95
Clarion Wines (020 8747 2069) £14.50

Sesti has popped up before in the Top 100 and remains one of my all-time favourite Tuscan wine producers. I adore this svelte, ripe, gamey, floral (lots of violets), bitter-cherry and dried cranberry-styled red and so will you.



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Under £25

2013 Mas d'Amile, Languedoc-Montpeyroux, France

Stone, Vine & Sun (01962 712351) £13.95

Languedoc is slowly discovering and registering its best vineyards. This pretty spot, with extraordinarily low-yielding 40 to 60-year grenache, syrah and carignan vines, has produced this stunning, exotic, smoky, church-incense and black fruit-scented red.



37

2013 Te Mata Syrah, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand

Wine Society (01438 741177) £12.50; Majestic web exclusive (majestic.co.uk) 2 for £14.99 each (down from £19.99)

Sunny Hawke's Bay, halfway down the east coast of New Zealand's north island, produces classy, characterful syrah. With a dusting of oak, sensuous plummy fruit plus a Rhône-style cracked black-pepper and violet bouquet, this one's a must.



38

2013 Domaine Grand Pousard, Côtes du Jura, France

Marks & Spencer £14

This unusual, light, bright, juicy red, from one of the Côtes du Jura's best producers, gets my summer vote. Made from the rare pousard grape, this fragrant, floral, tangy red goes down a treat with pulled pork, or charcuterie and comté cheese.



39

2008 Abba Tinta de Toro, Bodegas Francisco Casas, Spain

Friarwood (020 7736 2628) £16

Enjoy this mature, bottle-aged red – which spent more than a year in French and American oak barrels, resulting in lip-smacking, complex, rich, beefy, savoury, cinnamon-spiced fruit – with a juicy steak.



40

2011 Pavane Vacquéyras, La Bastide Saint Vincent, Rhône, France

Berry Bros & Rudd (0800 2802440) £16.50

Laurent Daniel's Pavane is a big wine with charm and the sort of smouldering, fragrant, tobacco, cedar, cigar-smoke perfume that will have you clamouring for more. This chunky 14.5 per cent red is a whizz with barbecued meats.



41

2010 Château Patache d'Aux, Médoc, Bordeaux, France

Montrachet (020 7821 1337) £17.50

Claret connoisseurs continue to debate the merits of the top-dog bordeaux vintages of 2009 and 2010. Personally, my money is on the 2009s, as the 2010s are so darned hefty and tannic. Fortunately, this lesser cru bourgeois resulted in the richest and ripest Patache ever, a 2010 bursting with rich, tannic, beefy, truffley fruit.



42

2013 Domaine Brusset Gigondas, Tradition Le Grand Montmirail, Rhône, France

Great Western Wine (01225 322810) £19.95; Haulsham Cellars (01323 846238) £19.95

If you cannot afford châteaufort, a great gigondas is the next best thing. This magnificent 2013 wine gets my vote. It smoulders with garrigue herb scents and lush, plump plum, black cherry and sensuous sandalwood fruit.



43

2012 Santenay Les Charmes, Vieilles Vignes, Bachey-Legros, Burgundy, France

Jascots (020 8965 2000) £22

Santenay used to be a little-known and untapped source of grand and great value-for-money red burgundy. Not any more – its fame goes before it. Tasty, single domaine offerings like this punch well above their weight, oozing dashing, oaky smoky, gamey fruit.



44

2007 Gevrey-Chambertin, Louis Latour, Burgundy, France

Majestic Wine 2 for £23 each (down from £28) until Wednesday

If your taste in red burgundy is for richer, fully mature reds, scoop up this one. It is crammed with deftly oaked, fine, tasty, beef tea, tobacco and mocha flavours. Don't hang on to it for long: it's ready for drinking now.



45

2012 Craggy Range Te Muna Road Vineyard, Pinot Noir, Martinborough, New Zealand

Majestic Wine 2 for £20 each (down from £25); Waitrose Cellar (0800 188881) £22.99

Craggy Range is one of New Zealand's top producers. This velvety pinot noir has layer after layer of complex cinnamon, woodsmoke and coffee bean-stashed fruit. Perfect with game and duck.



46

Fortified and sweet

Alegria Manzanilla, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Williams & Humbert, Spain

Half bottle Booths £4.99; Cambridge Wine (01954 214528) £4.99 until August 31; Waitrose £5.29; Quidbins £5.50

Magnificent bargain-basement manzanilla, which has all the tangy, tongue-tingling pizzazz that any summer sherry fan could ask for. Served cool, this manzanilla is the perfect summer aperitif.



47

Chambéry, French Dry Vermouth

Wine Society (01438 741177) £7.25 until Monday, then £8.95

Vermouth is back on the drinks tray. Made from a neutral base wine, fortified with a neutral grape-based brandy and flavoured with aromatic herbs, flowers and spices, vermouth is a must-have summer 2015 bottle. Of them all, the Wine Society's mint and angelica-scented Chambéry is brilliant value for money.



48

2012 Domaine les Roumanis, Muscat de Saint-Jean de Minervo, France

Oxford Wine Company (01865 301144) £9.99, 50cl

Not your average marmalade-scented vin doux naturel muscat, or fortified sweet wine. This one is summer 2015's go-to bottle with strawberries and cream. I loved its light, luscious, elegant, aniseed and white peach-licked palate, with a honey and white flowers-scented finish, and so will you.



49

2008 Château Raymond-Lafon Sauternes, Bordeaux, France

Wine Society £22; Wheelers Cellars (01206 713560) £25

Strawberries and cream were made for a great sauternes. Delicious ones such as this glorious, fine, waxy, honeyed, yellow peach and pineapple-stacked 2008, with lashings of crème brûlée on the finish, make a terrific finale to any grand summer meal.



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T
Jane MacQuitty's top 50 white wines for summer

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