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FT Magazine Wine

## **Jancis Robinson picks the best red wines for Christmas**

Cheap bordeaux, reasonable burgundies and lots of  
pinots, from £7 and up

**Jancis Robinson** DECEMBER 9 2023

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Pinot Noir can be just the thing for a festive meal, especially one with sweet accompaniments, so there are 10 suggestions below, including four not-overpriced red burgundies. But I couldn't resist recommending seven wines from that current hotbed of value, Bordeaux, too. I would always recommend buying by the case to reduce bottle prices substantially. (All stockists listed are in the UK.)

**Couleurs d'Aquitaine, Église St-Jacques NV Bergerac (13%)**

Sad for the Bergerac growers that they have to sell their Bordeaux tastealikes so cheaply.

£7 Tesco

**Morandé, Reserva One to One País 2021 Maule (14%)**

A very attractive emissary for the long-deplored Mission grape. Serve slightly cool as an aperitif.

£8.99 Majestic

**Pisano, Progreso Tannat Reserve 2022 Canelones (13.5%)**

Some freshness and marine influence. The Madiran grape seems very much at home in Uruguay.

£9.95 The Wine Society

**Volver, Tarima Monastrell 2022 Alicante (14.5%)**

Old Mourvèdre bushvines yield this great-value Spanish answer to Bandol. Sweet palate entry and some grip on the end.

£9.99 Majestic

**J Navascués, Cutio Garnacha/Carineña 2020 Carineña (14.5%)**

Mainly Grenache with Carignan from a star winemaker. Chock-full of delight with good freshness on the finish.

£10.95 The Wine Society

**Karavitakis, Komposos Liatiko 2022 Greece (13%)**

Liatiko is a fine Cretan vine and Nikos Karavitakis has fashioned pure pleasure from it.

£10.95 The Wine Society

**Leyda, Reserva Pinot Noir 2020 San Antonio (13.5%)**

Take care not to serve this Chilean wine too warm but there's lots to enjoy, with or without food.

£11 Tesco

**Ch Pey La Tour Réserve 2019 Bordeaux Supérieur (14.5%)**

I'd love to see this next to a Napa Cabernet that costs 10 times the price. Everything seems to have been lavished on this wine, which is arguably not for classicists, but is still really great value.

£11.95 The Wine Society

**Howard Park, Miamup Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Margaret River (14%)**

Concentrated Margs Cab aroma, blackcurrants dunked in a salt solution, which is nicer than it sounds. Excellent price for a tug at the coat-tails of one of the wine world's great Cab regions.

£12 Tesco

**Koyle, Coastal Pinot Noir 2022 Colchagua Costa (13%)**

Not complex but there's perfumed fruit, some structure and appetising Pacific influence on another Chilean wine.

*£13.50 The Wine Society*

**Cecilia Beretta, Soraie 2021 IGT Veneto (14%)**

Bittersweet dried-cherry flavour. Not unlike a dry Amarone.

*£13.80 Corney & Barrow*

**Ch Laulan 2019 Francs Côtes de Bordeaux (13.5%)**

Regeneratively farmed vines whose fruit has been aged in concrete, terracotta and old 400-litre oak barrels. A rather beautiful Bordeaux blend for the money.

*£15.99 MJ Wine Cellars*

**Ch Beauregard Ducasse 2019 Graves (13.5%)**

Pure, lively Graves with its lightly stony character. Far from a blockbuster but not lean.

Admirably persistent for the money.

*£14.50 Stone, Vine & Sun*

**Castello La Leccia 2020 Chianti Classico (14%)**

Organic. So pure and aromatic! Polished, almost claret-like, but with the tanginess of fine Sangiovese.

*£14.95 The Wine Society*

**Vasse Felix, Filius Cabernet/Merlot 2021 Margaret River (14%)**

Really nice lift and accessibility. Winemaker Virginia Willcock's magic dust is much in evidence here. Great balance.

*£14.99 Majestic*

**Villa Cafaggio 2020 Chianti Classico (13.5%)**

Smart, useful magnum of organic, classic, ripe Sangiovese that would grace any table, with tension, tang and something agreeably agricultural. Take me to a vine-shaded terrace in Tuscany . . .

*£14.99 (for 75cl bottle), 1.5 litre magnum for £28.99 Waitrose*

**Marchiori & Barraud Malbec 2022 Mendoza (14.5%)**

Bittersweet and completely unlike most Argentine Malbecs. This has lift and transparency. Exciting!

*£15.25 Corney & Barrow*

**La Ronciere, Idahue Estate Merlot 2018 Licantén (14%)**

Another fine wine from coastal Chile, this time with quite a bit of maturity. A real bargain.

*£15.50 Corney & Barrow*

**Ch Les Vieux Moulins, Cuvée Pirouette 2020 Côtes de Blaye (13.5%)**

Crazily underpriced. Well made with real vitality and harmony. So many wine drinkers I know would prefer this to a sweeter, riper, more concentrated wine.

*£15.95 Lea & Sandeman*

**Ch Roubaud, Cuvée Plaisir 2022 Costières de Nîmes (13.5%)**

Rich nose and no shortage of fine tannins. In fact, this southern Rhône blend is still a bit too young but should provide great drinking next year.

*£15.95 Yapp Bros*

**La Bastide Saint Vincent, Pavane 2021 Vacqueyras (14%)**

Rich, artisanal southern Rhône with everything in the right place.

*£16 Berry Bros & Rudd*

**Ch Lafon 2018 Lustrac (14%)**

Nicely balanced Cru Bourgeois. A good buy for lovers of classic claret. Just becoming approachable but no sign of ageing.

*£16.50 Corney & Barrow*

**Sierra de Toloño 2020 Rioja (13.5%)**

Edgy and very modern in a good way, verging on natural. Really lively wine that may upset some preconceptions about [Rioja](#). Fun and transparent.

*£16.50 Lea & Sandeman*

**Dom Borie la Vitarèle 2022 La Cuvée des Cigales 2022 IGP Pays d'Hérault (13%)**

Expressive and interesting Grenache/Syrah blend. Obviously terroir-driven. Bone-dry finish but not at all heavy. Their “easy-drinking wine” but still jolly good.

*£16.95 Lea & Sandeman*

**Lapis Luna Zinfandel, California 2021 North Coast (14.5%)**

Lovely historic engraving on the label. Made by ex-Bonny Doon winemaker Nicole Walsh from the Pauli Ranch in Mendocino. This would be great with salty sausages or saucisson. Surprisingly refreshing.

*£16.99 Majestic*

**Enrique Foster, Finca Los Altepes 2015 Uco Valley (14%)**

Good price for a fully mature Argentine Malbec. Toasty, interesting fruit on the nose — very smooth.

*£18.50 Private Cellar*

**Precision Wines, Prototype Zinfandel 2020 Lodi (15%)**

Smart label with a 1950s motor on it. Rich fruit but not fat. Well-made, appetising example of Old California's signature grape.

*£18.95 Barrique Fine Wines, £18.99 Nine Elms Wines, £19 The Salusbury Winestore*

**Matias Morcos Criolla Chica 2022 Mendoza (12.5%)**

Strong strawberry aroma on this Argentine version of the País/Mission grape. Soft tannins and lots of fruit and freshness. Drink, don't keep.

£19.50 Stroud Wine Co

**Ch Montaignillon 2019 Montagne-St-Émilion (14.5%)**

Old-fashioned label. Very slightly rustic, but sweet and ripe. Many St-Émilion enthusiasts would love this. The right-bank bargain has blood and guts.

£19.95 Lea & Sandeman

**Loom, Long Yarn Pinot Noir 2021 Adelaide Hills (13.5%)**

Unlike many Pinots, this one is savoury rather than sweet. Attractive red for drinking without food.

£19.99 Virgin Wines

**Neudorf, Tom's Block Moutere Pinot Noir 2020 Nelson (14%)**

Pretty, flattering fruit. A please-all from the north-west of New Zealand's South Island, and one that will go with the turkey.

£20.50 The Wine Society

**Ch Citran 2016 Haut-Médoc (13.5%)**

Very respectable and youthful claret in a useful double size that will still be drinking well next Christmas.

£43.50 a magnum The Wine Society

**Dominio del Cuarzo, Vino de Pueblo Guarilhue Cinsault 2021 Itata (13.5%)**

Personal project of Chilean Filipe Ramirez, who made wine at famed Rose & Arrow in Oregon. Masses of grunt and stoniness as well as raspberry fruit. Really exciting wine. Only Itata could deliver this.

£21.95 Vin Cognito

**Joey Tensley, Fundamental Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 Central Coast (14.5%)**

A new name on the UK market offering great value. All Joey Tensley's offerings at Berrys are worth trying. Except the Pinot.

£23 Berry Bros & Rudd

**Antoine Graillet & Raúl Pérez, Encinas 2020 Bierzo (13.5%)**

Lots of stoniness on the nose – very distinctive. Polished tannins and massive minerality but no shortage of flirtatious fruit.

£23.95 Yapp Bros

**Chanson, 2017 Côte de Nuits Villages (13%)**

Such a useful appellation, this! Never ridiculously expensive. Grown close to Gevrey-Chambertin.

£24 The Wine Society

**Thymiopoulos, Earth and Sky 2021 Naoussa (13.5%)**

From an utterly reliable northern Greek producer and the transparent Xinomavro grape at which he excels.

*£24 The Wine Society*

**Blankbottle, Master of None 2022 Western Cape (13.5%)**

Ragbag of eight grapes, five of them usually made into white wine, results in a delightful whole that's already fun to drink.

*£24 Swig*

**Ch Thivin, Les Sept Vignes 2021 Côte de Brouilly (13%)**

This landmark Cru Beaujolais is already a huge pleasure but should develop beautifully in bottle. Just what the doctor ordered.

*£24.50 Berry Bros & Rudd*

**Invincible, Número Dois 2020 Douro (14%)**

Blend of port grapes made by Rita Marques with Marc Kent of Boekenhoutskloof. Very detailed and distinctive. Should be broachable by Christmas but it's still youthful.

*£24.99 Majestic*

**Weinert, Cavas de Weinert 2011 Mendoza (14.5%)**

Argentine Bordeaux blend that's already more than 12 years old. Pungent, gamey, should appeal to Musar fans.

*£25 The Wine Society*

**Mama Afrika Pinot Noir 2019 Western Cape (13%)**

Unlike most other Pinots, but that's not a criticism. It's juicy, fresh and, like Chacra in Patagonia, establishes a different style of Pinot.

*£25.99 MJ Wine Cellars*

**Moya Meaker Pinot Noir 2021 Elgin (13%)**

An excellent Pinot Noir from one of South Africa's coolest wine regions. So appetising that I was tempted to swallow it when tasting it.

*£27.50 Lea & Sandeman*

**Dom Graeme & Julie Bott, First Flight Syrah 2020 IGP Collines Rhodaniennes (13%)**

From a plot next to Côte Rôtie apparently. Very true northern Rhône. Long and satisfying (if you're a fan of Côte Rôtie).

*£27.95 Lea & Sandeman*

**Dom Joël Remy, Fourneaux 2020 Savigny-lès-Beaune (13%)**

Pure red cherry fruit. No artifice. Dry and fresh enough to taste distinctly Burgundian. Lightly bitter but well made and persistent.

*£30.50 Lea & Sandeman*

**Luigi Giordano, Cavanna 2020 Barbaresco (14%)**

Sweet and fresh. Very easy to like with masses of tension and pleasure. Pure Langhe Nebbiolo.

*£33 Berry Bros & Rudd*

**Frédéric Magnien 2019 Fixin (13%)**

Very nice mature nose. Quite intense, could stand up to game. Savoury finish. This appellation offers fair value nowadays.

*£35.50 Yapp Bros*

**Filipa Pato, Nossa Calcário 2021 Bairrada (12.5%)**

Tannins are like the most luxuriously polished soft leather. Really interesting flavours quite apart from the wonderful texture. No hurry to drink this gem from northern Portugal.

*£35.61 Lay & Wheeler, £46.99 Handford*

**Hacienda López de Haro, Classica Gran Reserva 2005 Rioja (14%)**

Rioja has so much to offer, in all three colours now. This was my highest-scoring wine in a recent Wine Society tasting. So complex. Appealing but ageworthy too. Buy a case and save some for a while.

*£36 The Wine Society*

**L'Aurage 2018 Castillon (15%)**

From the same stable as Le Tertre Roteboeuf and in the same exuberant, late-picked style. Rich and satisfying — provided you don't need your claret to be austere. And much cheaper than Tertre.

*£36.15 Corney & Barrow*

**Benjamin Leroux 2017 Savigny-lès-Beaune (13%)**

Proper Savigny with no faults nor rough edges on the palate. You couldn't say it's great value but it's very well made. Admirably persistent.

*£45.50 Berry Bros & Rudd*