

Food & Drink

Rich pickings

In the last of her series on festive drinking, Jancis Robinson recommends strong and sweet wines

If you won't drink these often-underpriced treasures now, when will you? Most of these will last well over the festive season in an opened bottle. Roussillon joins the classic fortified wine regions as a useful source of the sweet, sticky and succulent.

DRY & STRONG

**Herederos de Argüeso,
Las Medallas Manzanilla NV
Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

Very light and delicate. It doesn't even taste 15% alcohol.
Juicy, fluid and refreshing.
£6.95 for 75cl *The Wine Society*

**Hijos de Rainera Peres Marin,
La Guita Manzanilla NV
Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

The famous "sherry with a string" and orange screwcap. Mild nose and marine flavours, all very gentle and correct with a bone-dry finish.
15% £5.50 for 37.5cl *Theatre of Wine and others*

**Sanchez Romate Fino Perdido
NV Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

Very pale tawny. Chock full of character. Really light, dry and zesty.
£7.95 for 37.5cl *The Wine Society*

Barbeito 10-year-old Sercial NV Madeira

Stunning quality from the magic innovator on this Atlantic isle. Extremely tangy and revitalising. Dry yet with great complexity for the price. A great apéritif and pick-me-up. The Verdelho is a bit richer and also quite delicious.

From £19.50 for 75cl *Underwood, Savage Selection, Berry Bros and many others*

**Equipo Navazos, La Bota de Manzanilla 22
Navazos NV Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

Pale dry sherry for the cognoscenti from an outfit that bottles direct from specially selected casks. The average age of this artisanal wine is about six years. Treat it like a white burgundy. Great value.
15% £20.95 for 75cl *Little Wine Club and others*

**Lustau Almacenista Manzanilla
Amontillada NV Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

Matured in a small bodega by Manuel Cuevas Jurado. Very pale bronze. Lovely soft, long-aged taste of the sea. What

**Quinta do Vallado**

10-year-old Tawny NV Port

A blend of such port grapes as Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo), Tinta Amarela, Tinta Franca and others. Pale fox red. Very obviously long-aged in old oak with the heady smell of "rancio" – almost more like a cognac than a port. But still lively, curranty and fun with a dry finish.

From £22.99 for 75cl *Blas ar Fwyd, Bibendum, The Grapevine*

**Triana Pedro Ximenez Viejo NV
Jerez – Xérès – Sherry**

From Hidalgo of La Gitana fame. Perhaps just a bit too much – thick, tooth-rottingly sweet and treacley – to drink but it would be great on ice cream or used to add richness to a savoury dish.

17% £14.95 for 75cl *Jeroboams*

Berrys' Crusted 2003 Port

Deep crimson. Real Douro heat in a bottle, plus raisins, liquorice and sweet dust. No shortage of character here. This tastes like an artisanal product – a great buy.

20% £18.35 for 75cl *Berry Bros*

Ch du Levant 2007 Sauternes

Full-throttle sweetness from a very good vintage for sweet white bordeaux. Very round, fat and massive – drink now! But there is quite a bit of persistence and character.

13.5% £18.50 for 75cl *Bibendum Wine*

**Martí Fabra Carreras Garnacha NV
Empordà-Costa Brava**

Heady, almondy dark red. Not that sweet, a sort of light Banyuls. Very appetising and moreish – really lovely for sipping after dinner. Very good value.

15% £12.50 for 50cl *Indigo Wine*

**Ch Puy Servain 2005
Haut Montravel**

Heady, rich and very intense. Great value from greater Bergerac. I thought I could taste the refreshing greenness of the local Muscadelle grape but apparently it's all Sémillon. Not so unlike the most famous wine of the region, Ch Tirecul La Gravière.

£12.95 for 50cl *Jeroboams*

Valdivieso Eclat Botrytis