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10 best Christmas fizz and fortified wines

Sparkling wines, sherry and port, selected by the Observer's wine writer

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fizz Photograph: Antonio Olmos for Observer Food Monthly

Tesco Finest Pignoletto, Emilia Romagna, Italy NV (£8.99, [Tesco](#))

In the same stylistic ballpark as prosecco – and capable of playing the same role in bellini cocktails, the Christmas morning buck's fizz, adult sorbet or granita and as accompaniment to light, fruity desserts – this pignoletto, made from the grape of the same name, has a kick of fresh lemon to go with its vivacious cream-and-sherbet fizz.

Best value: Villion Blanc de Blancs, Méthode Cap Classique, Viljoensdrift, South Africa (£13.70, [tanners-wines.co.uk](#))

One of several impressive versions of Cap Classique, South Africa's bottle-fermented answer to champagne, I've tasted recently (look out, too, for Graham Beck's The Rhona Blanc de Blancs 2009 for £13 at M&S), this all-chardonnay fizz is impressively brisk and fleet of

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foot, with flavours of lemon meringue pie.

Filipa Pato 3B Blanc de Blancs, Bairrada, Portugal 2013

(£15, [Oddbins](#))

Portuguese sparkling wines are hard to find outside the country, but, like her father, Luis Pato (Oddbins stocks his graceful Maria Gomes Antigo Metodo; £14.50), star Portuguese winemaker Filipa Pato shows how good they can be, using the local maria gomes, bical and arinto to make a gossamer light and dry, lemon-skin tangy aperitif.

Josef Chromy Sparkling, Tasmania NV

(£20, [Marks & Spencer](#))

Tasmania's cool climate made it a natural choice to plant chardonnay and pinot noir, and the still wines it makes from both are increasingly excellent. But those varieties also form the base of Australia's best sparkling wines, with Josef Chromy's offering a sophisticated, Champagne-like interplay of biscuity richness and penetrating acidity.

Waitrose Champagne Blanc de Blancs NV

([Waitrose](#), £24.99)

There will be plenty of eye-catching deals available for big name Champagne at Christmas (there always are), but pound-for-pound Waitrose's all-chardonnay own-label will be hard to beat, it's just so energetic and deliciously balanced between lip-smacking apple and lemon freshness and patisserie-shop richness.

Gaston Chiquet Tradition Brut Premier Cru Champagne NV

(£25.95, [bbr.com](#))

Produced by farmers who used to sell all their grapes to the famous houses, grower Champagnes are increasingly, and deservedly, fashionable. Many of them remain (relatively) good-value, with Antoine and Nicolas Chiquet's house non-vintage from the village of Dizy, with its super soft fizz and bright, taut apple fruit, a deliciously prime example.



Sánchez Romate Bella Luna PX

(£6.95, 37.5cl, [greatwesternwine.co.uk](#))

Syrupy PX sherry, made from, and tasting like, raisins, and with the texture and appearance of molasses, is



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one of very few wines that can stand up to the full-on flavours of Christmas pud. Such is this version's luxuriously figgy complexity and sweetness, it can also be served as a pudding both on its own, or poured over a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Morrison's Amontillado Sherry NV

(£6.99, [Morrison's](#))

With its utilitarian label and 1-litre bottle, it may not exactly scream "fine wine" on the shelf, but this concentrated, sweet-and-savoury sherry belies its appearance: with its flavours of salted nuts and fruit cake and bass hit of Marmite umami, it has deep, dark depths and works both as aperitif (with jamon, olives and almonds) and digestif (with aged manchego cheese).

Barbeito Boal Reserva Madeira

(£13.99, [Waitrose](#))

From the island's best producer, this sweet madeira has a blistering, wake-me-up slap of acidity running down its spine to cut through the figs and caramel richness of both the wine itself and a Christmas pudding. It works well with hard cheese, too, but should you have any left after that, it will keep in a cupboard for years.

Graham's Quinta dos Malvedos, Douro, Portugal 2001

(£27, [Sainsbury's](#))

Vintage port can be intoxicatingly lovely when it's young and inky and exploding with dark berry fruits, but it's even better when it's sharp corners are softened off with a bit of age. This single-quinta offering, a vintage made from a single vineyard in a year when a true vintage port wasn't made, is now wonderfully mellow and soft, the perfect fireside sip.



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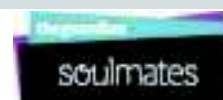
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