

The sweetest things

In the final part of her festive drinking guide, Jancis Robinson picks her 25 favourite sweet and strong wines

Go on – treat yourself! Wines are listed upwards in price per cl within the following three styles.

SWEET

Val d'Orbieu, Taste the Difference NV Muscat de St-Jean-de-Minervois
Great value. Really fresh, different, explosive and not at all industrial. Like grape cordial from the hills of the Languedoc. One of the finest southern French Muscat appellations. 15% £4.79 for 37.5cl

Rustenberg, Straw Wine 2010 Coastal Region
Blend of 56% Viognier, 41% Chenin Blanc and 3% Crouchen laid out to dry and concentrate the sugars on straw, then aged in barrel for five months. Lovely tangy bargain. Massive richness and then apple skins. Great, exciting balance. Drink this Christmas. Clean and bumptious. 10.5% £9.99 for 37.5cl

Seifried, Sweet Agnes Riesling 2010 Nelson
Super-fresh and tangy from the north-west of New Zealand's South Island. Sugars concentrated in dried grapes. Very fresh acidity. Would wake you up after a nap by the fire. 10.5% £13.99 for 37.5cl

Les Lions de Suduiraut 2009 Sauternes
AXA Millésimes' Ch Suduiraut has been producing reliably exciting and superior Sauternes for many years now, and has been supplying British retailers with some fine bargains with the offcuts. This is the new, official diffusion line, and very delicious it already is too. 13.5% £14.99 for 37.5cl

Grati, Villa di Monte Vin Santo 1995 Chianti Rufina
This may not be the very finest Vin Santo ever – it might even be a little old and certainly isn't the sweetest – but it is wonderful to find any example *chez* a mass retailer. This one is delightfully mature and nutty. 17% £16.99 for 37.5cl

Crociani, Vin Santo 2004 Montepulciano
Lovely combination of long oak maturation aromas and racy, dried-grape sweetness. Not that sweet but wonderfully energising. Serve with cheese? Nuts? Certainly not with anything very sweet. 17% £19.49 for 37.5cl

Ch Doisy-Védrines 2007 Barsac
Delicious, early-maturing fine Sauternes from a Bordeaux vintage in which the best wines were sweet and white. Lots of easy pleasure. Would do instead of a dessert. 13% £30.75 for 37.5cl

Royal Tokaji, Betsék Primae Classis Aszú 6 Puttonyos 2005 Tokaj
Hungary's most famous wine with massive sweetness and acidity. Luminous apricot tawny. Tastes of apricots and dusty velvet. Very bracing and zesty, a wine I found impossible to spit out even at the end of a very long professional tasting. Only 9.5% £55 for 50cl

DRY AND STRONG Emilio Lustau, Solera Jerezana Fino del Puerto NV Sherry
Ridiculously cheap for such a smoky, fresh, light, bone-dry aperitif. From a classic white, chalky Andalusian vineyard. 16.5% £8.49 for 75cl

González Byass, La Canoa Palo Cortado NV Sherry

Very pale tawny. Much muddier than the average Palo Cortado with some surely very old stock in here, but of real interest to sherry lovers. Just off dry. Could be great at the table. Ridiculous price for a 12-year-old wine. 20% £11.99 for 75cl

Maestro Sierra Fino NV Sherry
Fine, interesting, classic dry aperitif from a particularly traditional sherry bodega now being imported into the UK by Indigo Wine. 15% £14.99 for 75cl

Equipo Navazos, I Think Manzanilla NV Sherry
Bottled in October 2010 and still going strong. Very fine introduction to Manzanilla – the lightest, driest, most marine style of sherry – from the La Bota team. 15% £10 for 37.5cl

González Byass, Dos Palmas NV Sherry
New series of top-quality, bone-dry sherries bottled straight from individually selected casks. Dos Palmas is best value, but the Tres Palmas has even more age and even more tingling authenticity. 15.5% £13.95 for 50cl

Barbeito, Single Harvest 2000 Madeira
Greenish golden wine aged for nine years in barrel by Madeira's gifted

and innovative winemaker Ricardo Diogo. Look out for his special Lote and Madeira Collection bottlings, too. Dry and tangy but far from austere. A real shot in the arm. So dramatic it's almost medicinal! 19% £18.99 for 50cl

Fernando de Castilla, Antique Amontillado NV Sherry
Elegantly packaged, dry, nutty classic. Great with cheese and ham, as well as for warming up those who venture outside over the holidays. 19% £24.50 for 50cl

SWEET AND STRONG Emilio Lustau, Solera Jerezana Rich Cream NV Sherry
Eight-year-old Oloroso and Pedro Ximénez sherries have

been blended to make this slightly dusty but very bracing sweet, polished wine with a refreshingly dry finish and a hint of treacle. Great balance between age and sweetness. A completely ridiculous price! Really invigorating, not heavy at all. Sweet and polished but not remotely sickly. 20% £8.49 for 75cl

Symington, Waitrose LBV 2006 Port

This full-throttle port is a steal. They must be mad to be selling it at this price. Concentrated prunes and chocolate and lots of fun on the nose. Some subtlety and satin on the palate. Just fabulous for the money. 20% £9.99 for 75cl

Fontanel, Ambré 1999 Rivesaltes
The product of another raid on some of the world's stocks of mature sweet wine – in Roussillon this time. Heady and raisiny yet fresh. Caramel and rancio

flavours. It would be great with bitter chocolate. Miraculously fresh, racy and dry on the finish. Quite a bargain considering its age and interest value. 16% £14.95 for 75cl

Mas Amiel, Vintage Reserve 2008 Maury
More truly fantastic value from Roussillon. Dark crimson. Rich, glowing liquorice nose. Very mellow, attractive wine with no rough edges. Almost like claret somehow, in that it is so well balanced! Long and burnished. Still decades of life in it, even if it is drinkable now. Pungent finish. 16% £17.25 for 75cl

Quinta do Noval LBV 2004 Port
The first late-bottled vintage port from this excellent estate made

entirely from Quinta's own grapes and it is the real deal. How are the port producers going to persuade people to buy proper vintage port, which needs decades in the cellar, when such immediate treasures are to be had for a fraction of the price? 19.5% £17.99 for 75cl

Chambers Rosewood, Grand Muscat NV Rutherglen
Dark brownish orange. Lively macerated raisin flavours with a hint of Fisherman's Friend (original flavour). Dry finish. Well made – and well matured. Very persistent with a whiff of rose petals. 18.5% £32.50 for 37.5cl

González Byass, Noé Viejo 30-year-old Pedro Ximénez NV Sherry
Dark and lustrous. Brown with the tell-tale green rim that indicates prolonged (30+) years ageing in wood. PX grapes make the stickiest, blackest Montilla and sherry of all. Not nearly as refreshing as the Rich Cream – though a quite different style. Raisiny and great poured over ice-cream. All the flavours of Christmas pudding without the cooking. 15.5% £16.99 for 37.5cl

Symington, Taste the Difference 2003 NV Port
Rich, peppery and pure orange peel on the nose – great stuff! Just a tad expensive next to the sherries. Although Berry's Vintage Port 2007, also made by the Symingtons, is £45... 20% £34.99 for 75cl

Taylor's 20-year-old Tawny NV Port
Lustrous rose red. Slightly lacking freshness on the nose but only very slightly. Certainly mellow after long wood ageing. Not that sweet and very tangy. Refreshing and lively on the palate. 20% £22.95 for 37.5cl

Graham 2000 Port
Proper vintage port. Obviously ideally one would be drinking one's 1963s but should you have none in your cellar, the 2000s are probably the youngest vintage you could think of broaching. Polished, dense, explosive and opulent. 20% £45.95 for 75cl

For stockists see winesearcher.com

For more wines see JancisRobinson.com

For more columns, including Jancis's choice of festive fizz, see www.ft.com/robinson

'The Noé Viejo 30-year-old Pedro Ximénez NV sherry from González Byass is raisiny and has all the flavours of Christmas pudding without the cooking'