

Festive buys



With even more recommendations this month and a higher price limit for the special occasion, Decanter's associate editor Tina Gellie has picked out 34 exciting wines to try over the festive season. All are UK-available and perfect for drinking now



Birichino, Pétulant Naturel Malvasia Bianco, Monterey, California, US 2016 91

£27.95 **Berry Bros & Rudd**
A tongue-in-cheek 'Pétulant' Naturel: fermenting Malvasia juice is added to Malvasia wine, giving a second fermentation in bottle. Cloudy from the lees, it is an expressive, fun fizz with pretty honeysuckle notes, apricot and passion fruit. **Alcohol 13%**



The Society's, Exhibition English Sparkling, Kent UK NV 91

£21 **The Wine Society**
Ridgeview is often behind some of the best own-label English sparkling wines (like Booths and Marks & Spencer). This elegant Chardonnay-based blend is another winner, offering open, nutty digestive biscuit aromas, and a fresh green apple palate. **Alc 12%**



Tesco Finest, Premier Cru, Champagne, France NV 90

£19 **Tesco**
Decent fizz at under £20 – particularly Champagne – is always welcome at this time of year, and Tesco's is a solid buy to add to your trolley. It's Chardonnay dominant, using 2012 base wine, and offers leesy, toasty almond nougat notes alongside bright apple crispness. **Alc 12.5%**



Domaine de la Source, Rolle, Bellet, Provence, France 2015 94

£27 **Yapp Bros**
A gorgeous, textured white from an organic 5ha estate in Bellet, a tiny appellation in the hills above Nice. This unoaked Rolle (aka Vermentino) is a delicious, food-friendly wine with ripe stone and orchard fruit flavours along with hints of garrigue and a definite oyster shell tang. **Alc 14%**



Domaine Anne Gros, Cuvée Marine, Hautes-Côtes de Nuits, Burgundy, France 2016 93

£33.95 **Lea & Sandeman**
This vibrant, sappy cuvée has a hint of the sea about it, along with a chalky, leesy texture that complements floral, peach and tropical fruit. From just 1ha of vines, it sees 12 months in barrel (30% new) and has firm limey acidity. **Alc 14%**



Kooyong Port Phillip Estate, Farrago Single Vineyard Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia 2016 93

£32 **Enotria&Coe**
Super concentration of nutty, creamy peach fruit and underlying toasty vanilla oak. Amazing oily mouthfeel and a lingering finish with flinty mineral tones and sweet citrus acidity. Will age well. **Alc 13%**



**MUST-TRY
fizz**

Graham Beck, The Rhona Brut Rosé, Western Cape, South Africa NV 91

£15 **Marks & Spencer**
Graham Beck is a master at Methode Cap Classique wine (sparklings made in the traditional Champagne method) and The Rhona is always a reliable buy at M&S, which often has it on offer for under £13. This Pinot Noir and Chardonnay blend has a pretty pink hue, fine mousse and ripe summer pudding aromas and flavours, with yeasty complexity and crunchy green apple freshness. **Alc 12%** ➤



Barta, Oreg Király Dúló Dry Furmint, Mád, Tokaj, Hungary 2015 92

£23.50 **Corney & Barrow**
Oreg Király Dúló means 'the Old King Vineyard' – a steep, stony 10ha site first planted in the 13th century. Concentrated, intense and complex, this has juicy pineapple, guava and orange blossom notes backed by gentle oak from nine months in old barrels. Super! **Alc** 13.5%



Domaine Daniel-Etienne Defaix, Vieilles Vignes, Chablis, Burgundy France 2013 92

£28.99 **Liberty Wines**
Beautiful concentration, richness and ripeness. Russet apples and creamy, textured cashew notes linger on the long mineral finish. Defaix's premier cru 2003s, Les Lys and Côte de Lechet, are exceptional value at £40 as well. **Alc** 12.5%



Domaine Drouhin, Cuvée Arthur Chardonnay, Dundee Hills, Oregon, USA 2015 92

£29-£35 **AG Wines, Eton Vintners, Noel Young, Twelve Green Bottles**
Véronique Drouhin aims to combine the 'elegance' of Meursault with the 'purity' of Chablis. Complex, structured, with vibrant apple and stone fruit overlaid with well-handled, toasty oak. **Alc** 13.5%



Greywacke, Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand 2016 92

£34.95 (150cl) **Mr Wheeler, South Downs Cellars, The Solent Cellar, Winedirect**
A magnum of this Marlborough standardbearer is guaranteed to impress over the festive season. Lipsmackingly fresh grapefruit acidity with hints of grass behind the ripe, intense mango, lychee, honeydew and passion fruit. **Alc** 13.5%



Kloster Ebernach, Artisan Pinot Blanc, Mosel, Germany 2016 92 **B**

£16.67 **Red Squirrel**
Australian-born Martin Cooper is winemaker at this historic monastery that has made wine since 1673. This inaugural biodynamic Pinot Blanc – which sees six months' lees contact in old barrels – is exciting: leafy notes on a creamy sherbet and lemongrass palate. **Alc** 11%



Rustenberg, Chardonnay, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2017 92

£10 **Waitrose**
Intense, complex peach, apple and grapefruit on a creamy, leesy palate. Sinewy and long with great integration of fruit weight, alcohol and oak – fermented and aged on lees in barrels (25% new) for a year. On offer till 12 December; normally £13.99. **Alc** 13.5%



Domaine Lyrarakis, Voila Assyrtiko, Crete, Greece 2017 91 **Ⓞ**

£11.99-£12.99 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Majestic**
What was once a limited parcel is now a full-time listing at Majestic, and also available under different packaging at Berry Bros (which also has Lyrarakis' gorgeous Vidiano and rare Plytó). Tart, juicy citrus and apples with a long, sappy, chalky mouthfeel. **Alc** 13.5%



Elgin Ridge, 282 Sauvignon Blanc, Elgin, South Africa 2016 91 **B**

£14.15 **Les Caves de Pyrene**
Vines were first planted at Brian and Marion Smith's estate in 2007 and are now certified biodynamic. This vibrant Sauvignon, made by Kosie van der Merwe, is at once savoury and saline yet ripe and tropical, with great texture, complexity and palate weight. **Alc** 14%



Domaine JL Chave Sélection, Circa Blanc, St-Joseph, Rhône, France 2016 94

£25.50 **Yapp Bros**
While the vast majority of St-Joseph is red, its whites are well worth seeking out, and here is a great-value example from a leading name. This 100% Roussanne is made under the Chave family's négociant label, from the walled 4ha Clos Florentin vineyard. Gorgeous, seductive hay and nut aromas and supple apple skin palate. Powerful, long and textured. Fewer than 5,000 bottles made. **Alc** 14%



Château La Mascaronne, Rosé, Provence, France 2017 91 **Ⓞ**

£29.95 (150cl) **Berry Bros & Rudd**
A lovely magnum of organic rosé that will flow seamlessly from festive smoked salmon blinis to shellfish or vegetarian starters. A blend of Grenache and Cinsault, it shows crunchy redcurrant fruit, hints of thyme and a lick of sea spray with a taut acid backbone. **Alc** 13.5%



Cullen, Mangan East Block, Margaret River, Western Australia 2014 93 **B**

£33.99 **Liberty Wines**
A biodynamic red proudly showing what the 'other' Bordeaux grapes can do. Here, 72% of Petit Verdot joins 28% Malbec, offering a seductive, vital red full of boysenberry, violets and spice, plus grippy, chocolatey tannins from 17 months in French oak. **Alc** 14%



Luigi Bosca, Single Vineyard Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina 2016 93 **Ⓞ**

£10 **Waitrose**
From a low-yielding vineyard at 960m in Vistalba, this super Malbec has a beautiful balance of ripe blue fruits, moderate alcohol and vanilla-edged oak from a year in barrel, leading to a long, cherry liqueur finish. After 12 December, it reverts to the usual £17.99. **Alc** 13.5%



Closierie des Alisiers, Vieilles Vignes, Marsannay, Burgundy, France 2015 92 **Ⓞ**

£26 **Yapp Bros**
Son of Jean-Marc Brocard in Chablis, Stéphane began his own négociant down south and this is his own label. Classic undergrowth and wild cherry notes from 45-year-old vines. Firm oak from 15 months' ageing (20% new barrels) but it remains fresh. **Alc** 13%



Château Lalande d'Auvion, Médoc Cru Bourgeois, Bordeaux, France 2015 93 **Ⓞ**

£10 **Waitrose**
Waitrose's M Marquis de Terme 2014 and Deyrem Valentin 2015 are lovely clarets for £29.99, but you can't top this for £10 (£15.99 after 12 December). Excellent grip of dusty tannins supports spicy bramble fruit that is starting to show savoury development. **Alc** 13.5%



Heinrich, Blaufränkisch, Leithaberg, Austria 2015 93 **B**

£31.99 **Liberty Wines**
Full-frontal, vibrant aromas of dark cherries, plums, florals, undergrowth and exotic spices leap from the glass and follow on the long, plush palate. Fruit comes from old vineyards farmed biodynamically; matured for 20 months in used 500-litre oak barrels. **Alc** 13%



Clau de Nell, Grolleau, Anjou, Val de Loire, France 2015 92 **B**

£33.99 **Liberty Wines**
The late Anne-Claude Leflaive bought this struggling biodynamic domaine in 2008. From 2ha of old vines, Grolleau – normally used in bland rosés – is taken to another level: bright acidity lifts crunchy pomegranate fruit, with spice and texture from 18 months in old Leflaive barrels. **Alc** 12%



Ocean Eight, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia 2016 92

£26-£33 **Available via UK agent Hallgarten & Novum**
This 'second' wine to the single-vineyard Aylward Reserve, from vines more than 20 years old, has a more vibrant, lifted red-fruit profile than a brooding black fruit one, with gentle oak spice from 12 months in French oak puncheons. **Alc** 13.5%



Donnafugata, Sul Vulcano, Etna, Sicily, Italy 2016 94

£29.99 **Liberty Wines**
It's not just the artwork of the 'goddess mountain' of Etna that makes the first release of this pretty, floral red stand out – it's the sheer drinkability! Distinctly mineral, with an almost saline tang from the volcanic terroir, it has notes of wild raspberry and strawberry, sappy tannins and subtle spice from 14 months in used French oak. Refreshing with impeccable balance and very moreish – a delicious discovery. **Alc** 13.5% ➤



**Sierra de Toloño,
Camino de Santa
Cruz, Rioja Alavesa,
Spain 2016** 92

£35 **Lea & Sandeman**
Old-vine Tempranillo from a single-vineyard in Labastida at 650m. The wine is fermented in amphora then aged for a year in barrel. Supple, silky tannins and crunchy black berries of amazing purity, enlivened by a deep mineral seam. Just 900 bottles made. **Alc** 14%



**Villa Antinori,
Tuscany, Italy 2015** 92

£10 **Waitrose**
With a wine history dating to 1385, Antinori has made this reliable Sangiovese and Bordeaux red blend since 1927, so its pedigree is not in question! Toasty oak melds into succulent cherry-berry fruit, with fine tannins and bright acidity to age well. Excellent value, even at the usual £15.99. **Alc** 13.5%



**Le Clos des Cazaux,
La Tour Sarrasine,
Gigondas, Rhône,
France 2015** 91 

£34 (150cl) **Lay & Wheeler**
An impressive magnum from a fine family domaine (The Wine Society's magnum of Vieilles Vignes Vacqueyras Blanc is also brilliant value at £43). This old-vine Grenache-dominant blend is full of leathery red berry fruit, smoky spiced oak and grippy tannins. **Alc** 14.5%



**Porta 6, Lisbon,
Portugal 2015** 90

£16.99 (150cl) **Majestic**
A magnum of juicy, quaffable red for £16.99? Yes, really! There's nothing overly complex but it is well made, with approachable soft tannins, ripe plum flavours and a hint of leathery spice on the medium-bodied palate. Very easy to see why it's a favourite with Majestic customers. (The 75cl bottle is £8.99.) **Alc** 13.5%



**Dizsnókó, 1413
Tokaji Aszu, Tokaj,
Hungary 2013** 91

£14.95/50cl **Lea & Sandeman**
A versatile, great-value buy from one of the country's leading producers, whose wine estate was first recorded the Hungarian land registry in 1413. Rich but not cloying, with piercing acidity to balance the dried apricot, yuzu, lemon marmalade and barley sugar flavours. **Alc** 13%



**Sainsbury's, Taste the
Difference Sauternes,
Bordeaux, France 2015** 90

£12/37.5cl **Sainsbury's**
Made by the premier cru Château Guiraud, this unctuous Sauternes is kept from being cloying by its bracing acidity. The 65% Semillon and 35% Sauvignon Blanc sees 12 months' oak ageing, giving a subtle toasty vanilla edge to the apricot, honey and barley sugar palate. **Alc** 13.5%



**Taylor's, Quinta de
Vargellas, Douro,
Portugal 2004** 93

£29.99 **Co-op, Majestic**
A cracking buy for a lovely vintage Port that is drinking beautifully now but will certainly cellar well for a decade or more. Full of Christmas cheer: rich, heady, spice-infused bramble fruit on an inky, high-toned palate balanced by fresh acidity. Delicious! **Alc** 20.5%



**Liberti, Superiore
Dolce, Marsala, Sicily,
Italy 2014** 90

£5/37.5cl **Morrison's**
Marsala is usually overshadowed by more popular fortifieds, but it is made in a similar way to Sherry and is often a real bargain. Here, dried fruit, honey, spice and woody notes combine to make it the perfect addition to boozy custard, trifle and tiramisu, with enough left in the bottle for a tippie alongside. **Alc** 18%



**HIGH
STREET
choice**

**El Piadoso, Gran Reserva,
Rioja, Spain 2008** 94 

£10 **Waitrose**
Like all the Waitrose wines on these pages, this is part of a pre-Christmas '10 wines at £10' offer until 12 December. Normally £16.99, this is the pick of them: a mature Gran Reserva boasting complex ripe wild strawberry, sweet plums and toasty vanilla-edged coconut oak alongside more developing baked fruit and leathery characters. A great Christmas gift for Rioja lovers, or to serve with roast lamb or beef. **Alc** 13.5%