

IT DOESN'T GET BETTER THAN THIS...



Trust the experts to find top quality wines that represent unbeatable value. *Jane Cuthbertson* lets us in on her secret wine list to accompany a perfect festive feast



Christmas is always a time of year when we like to push the boat out, but in the present climes, the pressure on our pockets is greater than ever. So I've put together a few suggestions for some fantastic wines to enjoy without compromising on quality or putting too much strain on the purse strings.

What better way to start off a special day than with a glass of something cold and fizzy? Lois sparkling brut £11.25 (75cl), from the Enrique Foster stable in Mendoza fits the bill perfectly. Mauricio Lorca, chief winemaker and one of the rising stars in Argentina has produced one of the first sparkling wines made using the Malbec grape. Elegant, yet easy to drink, with delicate raspberry fruit and soft acidity, this is streets ahead of many lower priced Champagnes I've tasted.

Domaine Dauny makes an

organic Sauvignon Blanc in Pouilly sur Loire to the west of the town Sancerre. A delightful classic, grassy Sancerre with clarity and purity, elegant enough to grace any table. It's a real steal at £11.95 from £14 (75cl).

I must admit I am a bit of a Francophile, so Christmas Day at Chez Cuthbertson often involves Burgundy, white or red, but usually both! We have a parcel of Bourgogne Blanc and Rouge from Domaine Bitouzet-Prieur, one of our premier growers. Not just a run of the mill generic Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, each of the wines have a high proportion of Meursault and Volnay included in the cuvee and, at only £14.50 (75cl) they represent amazing value for money. These wines are very limited and are exclusive to Barrica Wines in the UK.

If a fuller bodied red is your bag, No 7 Rouge from Domaine La Croix Belle (on offer at only

£10 from £12.30), is one of the first wines listed at Barrica, and is also one of our most popular reds. A blend of seven grape varieties, producing a classic southern French red full of quality and finesse. It's a perfect match for the Christmas main course, but is versatile enough to match a cheese board, so splash out on a few bottles while you can!

One of our most exciting finds this year has been another wine made by Mauricio Lorca and is a little piece of history in the making. We believe this to be the world's first commercial blend of Argentina's most well known red and white grapes, Malbec and Torrontes. The inspiration for Malbrontes (£7.95 75cl or two for £14), was taken from Cote Rotie in northern Rhone. The delightfully fragrant aromatic Torrontes grape is added to the classic, chunky, succulent Malbec that we all love so much, a portion

of which has been matured in oak. A full bodied red so soft and approachable, it can even be served slightly chilled with chocolate.

To finish off our Christmas feast, in our house an odd glass of port is obligatory! Although vintage port would always be top of my wish list, Niepoort Ruby Dum is an excellent alternative and a stunning buy at £12 (75cl). It is definitely not like so many of the sweet, jammy ports which are available in huge quantities at this time of year. It is smooth, velvety and fruity with a rich, structured finish. At this price point, it just doesn't get any better in my book!

Happy Christmas! ■

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