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Top 20 white and fortified wines



Jancis Robinson Author alerts

These vintages gained a score of at least 17 out of 20 and range from sweet and/or strong to dry and light

All of these whites and fortified wines gained a score of at least 17 out of 20 from me recently. I have deliberately not separated the sweet and/or strong from the dry and lighter in an effort to encourage you to try some from the former group.

I plan to make sparkling recommendations on December 20.

Domaine Pochon 2012 Crozes-Hermitage



Round and satin-textured. Soft, exotic fruit flavours — papaya actually. Fun and different. But low in acid, so it needs to be drunk without delay. 12.5%

£85 per 12 bottles in bond, Justerini & Brooks (equivalent to £7.08 a bottle)

Charles Schléret Sylvaner 2006 Alsace

This is a real find: a bargain eight-year-old example of an ancient grape variety that is often overlooked. Round and soft but chock-full of complex tertiary aromas and grapefruit peel. Lots of fun. This would make a devilish wine to serve blind. Like a

crunchy exploding fruit in your mouth. Quite remarkable. 12%

£11.50, Yapp Bros

Pandolfi Price, Larkün Chardonnay 2013 Itata

The Burgundy-trained François Massoc's unoaked but lees-aged Chardonnay from the deep south of Chile. Very Chablis-like nose and palate — super juicy and lively with very bright crystalline fruit and energy. Great value. 13.5%

£12.50 Stone, Vine & Sun

Domaine Bellegarde, Cuvée Tradition 2012 Jurançon Moeuux

Not much nose but fabulous balance of tang, acidity and sweetness. A perfect sweet wine for foie gras? So direct and revitalising. Exceptional value for a full 75cl bottle although half bottles are also available at £8.75. 13.5%

£14.95, Yapp Bros

Tissot, Empreinte Chardonnay 2012 Arbois

The Burgundian grape with a fashionable Jura accent, from one of the region's most admired producers. Lightly nutty nose. Clean, fresh and tight. A thoroughly satisfying palate scrub, this would wake up the most jaded taster. 13%

£16.20, The Sampler

Doniene, Barrel Ferment 2011 Txakoli

There is much more flavour in this wine than in the average example of this light Basque seaside wine. From a



Sylvaner
Schléret 2006



Jurançon
Bellegarde

winery formed by three friends who recuperated an ancient, abandoned winery. The oak imprint is very light and the wine is still very clean and fresh. Really exciting and long. This is the most intense example of this wine I have ever come across. 13%

£16.20, *The Sampler*

Kumeu River Estate Chardonnay 2011 New Zealand

Master of Wine Michael Brajkovich produces some of the most refined Chardonnays grown outside Europe. Pale gold. Crunchy, mealy nose with masses of refreshing pure green fruit on the palate. Racy and still very youthful. 14%



Kumeu River

£17.50, *The Wine Society*; £23.50, *Berry Bros and others*

Grosset, Springvale Riesling 2013 Clare Valley

The earlier-maturing Riesling from Australia's most admired producer of it. Lovely race, minerals and chew. Dry and convincing. Pretty Germanic actually. Its Grosses Gewächs German counterpart would cost far more than this. 12.5%

£19.68, *Slurp.co.uk*; £19.99, *Invinity Wines*; £20 *The Wine Society and others*

Domaine Ibarria 2012 Irouléguay

A complex French Basque wine that tastes curiously minty and very like verveine. This ain't a wine, it's a hugely characterful tisane! Precise and fun. With a strong streak of passion fruit on the end. Very distinctive. It's grown in a sheltered bowl, hence the high alcohol. 60% Petit Courbu, 40% Petit Manseng. 14.5%

£19.95, *Yapp Bros*

Suertes del Marqués, Vidonia 2013 Tenerife

Stunning value in this super-tangy answer to white burgundy from centenarian ungrafted vines grown on volcanic soils, high above the Atlantic. 13.5%

£22.70, *Theatre of Wine*; £23 *Highbury Vintners*

J L Chave Sélection, Céleste 2012 St-Joseph

One from the increasingly substantial negociant business run in tandem with Jean-Louis Chave's personal domaine in Mauves centred on the family holdings on the hill of Hermitage. Round, full and off dry with masses of seductive fruit and soft texture. Gorgeously opulent. 14%

£23.95, *Yapp Bros (01747 860423, not available to order online)*

Huet, Le Haut Lieu Demi-Sec 2008 Vouvray

A wonderfully versatile wine from a tiny vintage. Toasty suggestion of hazelnut richness but so much refreshing acidity that it could be enjoyed with a wide range of foods — and not just the conventional white wine ones. 13.5%

£28, *The Wine Society*

Domaine Barou 2012 Condrieu

Lovely, smudgy, savoury classic Condrieu. Loose and ready but it could only be Condrieu. It's more like a headily perfumed cloud than something sharp. Tant mieux. Like a cloud — pretty substantial. A new name to me. 14%

£29, *The Wine Society*

Emilio Lustau, Almacenista Juan García Jarana, Oloroso Pata De Gallina NV

Miraculously pure, pale yellow tawny sherry from a small, individual stockholder rather than a big bodega. So clean and fresh. Sprightly nuttiness. Bring on the nuts and cheese. 20%

£19.95 per 50cl, *Berry Bros (equivalent to just under £30 a bottle)*



Grosset
Springvale
Riesling



Vidonia



Irouléguay Ibarria
Blanc 2012

Domaine d'Henri, Fourchaume Premier Cru, Vieilles Vignes 2012 Chablis

Berry Bros have assembled quite a collection of top-quality Chablis from the distinctly superior 2012 vintage. This one, with its smoky nose and tantalisingly massive juiciness and fruit seems one of the most exciting. No hurry to drink it. 13%

£33, Berry Bros



Condrieu 'Les Terroirs' 2012

François Merlin, Terroirs 2012 Condrieu

Smoky dried-apricot nose. Really fun drink with lots of character. Made up of 12 different tiny parcels. Lots of individuality yet unmistakably Condrieu. Made in stainless steel and aged in traditional large oak demi-muids. Persistent. 13.5%

£33.50, Yapp Bros

Taylor's 20 Year-Old Tawny Port

Silky smooth, top-quality, wood-aged port that would be a delight with cheese. But go for its counterpart from Quinta do Noval at £40 from The Wine Society if you seek something sweeter, more sumptuous and with even more complexity. 20%

£34, The Wine Society

Fernando de Castilla, Antique Oloroso NV Sherry

Pale orange. Toffee nose with a strong green streak. Pungent and rancio and a silly low price. So clean. M & S sells a 15-year-old Oloroso from the same fine address for just £15 per 50cl. About 20 years on average. 20%

£23 per 50cl, The Wine Society (equivalent to £34.50 a bottle)

Sandhi Chardonnay 2012 Sta Rita Hills

New-wave cool Californian with flavours of stone fruit and real substance. There is more than a hint of burgundy in this, not least because it gets better and better towards the finish. Great intensity for the alcohol level and not a hint of sweetness. 12.8%

£34.95, Roberson

Tolpuddle Chardonnay 2012 Tasmania

Light, fresh, green and with good appetising fruit. Buying this Tasmanian vineyard was possibly the cleverest thing that Shaw + Smith of the Adelaide Hills ever did. Great precision and excitement. Eerily Puligny-like. 13%

£35.35, Miles Better Wines; £46.60, Hedonism; £49, Harvey Nichols

Last week: Christmas red wines

Sparkling wine picks will follow in the December 20 edition of FT Weekend Magazine. For all Jancis Robinson's Christmas recommendations go to ft.com/christmaswine

Illustration by Ingram Pinn

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Oloroso Pata
Lustau

Buying this Tasmanian vineyard was possibly the cleverest thing that Shaw + Smith of the Adelaide Hills ever did



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