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Tagus Creek

Asda's award-winning bargains

MULTI-award winning wines often come at a price. Yet Asda has impressed me for years with its ability to offer some truly excellent wines without breaking the bank.

This year is no exception with the supermarket giant boasting a crop of low-to-medium price own-brand wines that have scooped a barrel-full of honours in major competitions.

Perhaps the most startling is its Wine Selection Marques del Norte Rioja 2012 which notched up bronze at all three big competitions – the International Wine Challenge (IWC), the International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC) and the Decanter World Wine Awards. The surprise is that the youthful, juicy rioja – crafted from tempranillo and garnacha grapes costs only £4.25 making it exceptional value.

It's in a modern rioja style with plenty of fruit flavour – red berries and cherries – plus hints of oak, spice and tannin.

For just a pound more Asda Wine Selection Spanish Garnacha Tempranillo 2011, from the Valencia region, is also excellent. The 2012 won a Decanter silver yet my local store is stocking the 2011 which is packed with dark berry flavours, subtle spice, hints of vanilla, refined tannins and a dry finish.

For just £4, Asda is stocking Tierra del Sol Tempranillo 2010 from well-known rioja producer Berberana. This is not a rioja but from the La Mancha region of Castilla, in the sun-baked lands south of Madrid. It's well-balanced, easy-drinking and good at the rock-bottom price with aromas of vanilla, red fruit plus hints of spice, tar and liquorice. Flavours include vanilla and plum although it lacks intensity.

Sticking with the Iberian



peninsula, Asda has two good award-winning well-priced Portuguese reds.

Both wines are made from blends which include the great rioja grape, tempranillo, but under different synonyms.

Its Extra Special Dao 2011 is made by **Falva** from the country's most celebrated red grape, Touriga Nacional. It also includes aragonez (the area's name for tempranillo) and Jaen (which is a synonym for the Spanish red grape Mencia). Reduced from £7.25 to just £6, the wine won IWC and Decanter bronze and it's easy to see why. The nose is excellent with clean aromas of red and dark fruits and herbs. The taste is exactly as the label says: dark fruits and herbs but add to that hints of chocolate and good concentration. There's a lot of flavour in this wine and lots going on but above all it oozes class.

The Extra Special Douro 2010, made by the large, quality-conscious producer Sogrape, picked up an IWC commended and is selling at £5.50. Made from Tinta Roriz (yet another name for tempranillo) plus Touriga Franco and Touriga Nacional grapes, it displays an intense mint and red fruit nose and taste with hints of vanilla.

Reduced from £7.25 to just £5

is Asda's Extra Special Shiraz 2011, from France's Pays d'Oc region.

Winning an IWSC silver outstanding award, it's crammed with ripe fruit flavours and packs a smell that conjures up images of super-hot sunny days. Flavours of blackberry and plum are supported by hot spice, tar and cedar.

Given inflation, it's rare that the most expensive wine in this column is just £7. The Asda Wine Selection Langhorne Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2012, produced by Complexity Wines in South Australia, notched up a Decanter silver medal. Made with the addition of some shiraz grapes, it's excellent with an intensely blackcurrant nose and a classic cabernet taste of blackcurrant and mint and hints of spice and vanilla.

The Wine Selection Langhorne Creek Chardonnay 2012 was commended at the Decanter awards and is good at £6 a bottle. The creamy, vanilla nose is supported by sweet nectarine aromas with a touch of citrus and tropical fruit. The well-balanced taste is intense peach and citrus with subtle oak and a grapefruit

finish. It's mellow with good depth and intensity and I'm a little surprised it didn't show better at the awards.



>> Langhorne Creek chardonnay