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Portugal's wine revolution

IN April 1974 Portugal underwent the Carnation Revolution – a popular military coup that ended the country's dictatorship and heralded democracy.

In the words of Michael Caine 'not a lot of people know that' – although the actor denies ever uttering the catchphrase. Not a lot of people know that either.

What is perhaps slightly better known is Portugal's wine revolution – although to many Mateus and its novelty bottle is as far into the country's wine industry that they've ever ventured

Portugal is the world's 12th largest wine producer and its offering has improved steadily since the 1990s when European cash funded much-needed modernisation.

The Carnation Revolution is celebrated every April with Freedom Day so to mark such an important milestone (well, why not?) I dived mouth first into a small rack of excellent Portuguese reds and mediocre whites.

First up is the excellent Churchill Estates 2010 from Portugal's UNESCO protected Douro wine region which is best known for producing Port.

Priced £11.49 (or £9.99 under Majestic's two-bottle discount), this International Wine Challenge (IWC) bronze medal red is crafted from indigenous varieties Touriga Nacional and Touriga Franca which are both used to make Port plus l'inta Roriz (Portugal's name for Spain's famous tempranillo grape).

Oak aged, the rich nose has plenty of vanilla and cream plus cherry and herbs. The taste is equally good with cherry and plenty of spice plus a touch of chocolate, liquorice and raisin. It's not the cheapest red but it's good with some tannin and acidity adding to the quality mix.

Crasto Douro 2012 is reduced

ANDREW CAMPBELL

ON WINE



to £8.99 in Majestic under the two-bottle discount. It's another well-structured red with masses of herbs and peppery spice.

West Midlands-based Tanners has a decent Portuguese selection within its extensive range which is available online.

Tanners Douro Red 2011 is made by biodiversity experts Duorum Vinhos and has an excellent nose of dark summer fruits, cedar and tar. The intense taste is beautifully balanced and reminiscent of summer hedgerows. It's selling at £8.20 or £17.20 for a magnum.

Duorum Colheita Douro Red 2011 is £11.90 a bottle at Tanners and has a nose of dark fruit, herbs and a big dollop of creamy vanilla. There's also a hint of spice and pencil lead in its rich, smooth taste.

Tagus Creek is a familiar Portuguese brand selling in Tesco, Asda, Waitrose among others.

The Tagus Creek Shiraz Trincadeira 2012 blend from the Alentejano region – which covers a large part of sun-baked central and southern Portugal – is priced just £6.25 in Asda. It scooped a Decanter Best in Class and Regional Trophy plus a bronze at the International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC). The nose is complex and deep for such a young wine with aromas of leather, chocolate, vanilla and red fruit. The taste is rich, complex and smooth with

flavours of herbs, spice and red and dark fruits. Makers **Valua** have got this wine very right making it exceptional for the price.

They've also done a decent job with Tagus Creek Chardonnay Ferno Pires 2013 – a white that like its red brother matches a French grape variety with a local one. Also £6.25 in Asda, the 2012 claimed an IWSC silver. I suspect it was better than the more recent vintage which boasts a ripe melon, pear, tropical fruit and peach nose.

There's also plenty of tropical fruit including banana and melon on the tongue plus a touch of minerality. The balance is good with a dry finish but there's a bubble gum quality about this white that will turn some people off.

Finally to Portugal's famous Vinho Verde – which hails from the north of the country.

Quinta de Azevedo Vinho Verde 2013 is reduced to £5.99 in

Majestic under its two bottle discount. It has a deep citrus nose with a hint of fennel and tropical fruit. Like a refreshing mouthwash, there's a tingle on the tongue and a lively acidity but the lime taste is a touch watery.

Equally dilute is Vidigal Vinho Verde 2012, priced £7.50 from Tanners. Only 9.5 per cent alcohol it has aromas of lime, flowers and minerals.

