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Harvest bounty

Our drinks columnist SAM WYLIE-HARRIS selects wines to complement some classic English dishes.

FOLLOWING the success of last year's British Food Fortnight, the theme of 2014's national celebration of English dishes – which continues until October 5 – is a harvest festival.

What better inspiration is there to stock up your own cellars with wines that perfectly complement our gastro pub favourites, classic English dishes and seasonal fare?

Denbies Wine Estate in Dorking, Surrey, opens its cellar doors to more than a third of a million visitors a year, providing English wines have plenty to celebrate. Denbies produce Finest English White 2011, England (£8.99, Tesco) exclusively for Tesco, which is from one of England's leading vineyards.

Now that there's an 'r' in the month for the foreseeable future, a crisp sauvignon blanc such as Finca Las Ninas Sauvignon Blanc 2013, Valle Central, Chile (£9.99, laithwaites.co.uk) pairs beautifully with shellfish or soft, flaky fish.

The hilly terrain of the Dao region

in northern Portugal is planted with a wide range of indigenous grapes and its hero bunch, touriga nacional, along with other local varieties, produce well-balanced, food-friendly reds that are full-bodied, berry rich and perfect with a classic shepherd's pie, or game ahead of the shooting season.

A bit of a rough diamond that polishes up well, and is especially enjoyable for the price, Extra Special DAO 2012, Portugal (£5, Asda) is a rustic style with plenty of smooth blackberry and plummy fruit, pepper and spice.

Fo'z Dao 2012, Portugal (£7.99, Tesco) is less bistro and more refined with herbal dark fruit aromas, generous plum and ripe berry fruits with savoury notes on the textured, balanced finish with pleasing acidity.

One of the best loved food wines, valpolicella rolls off the tongue as easily as wolfing down a plate of lasagne al forno, but this juicy red wine also works like a dream with

roast beef and pork. For a really fine example that's far more trated than the usual light, tangy style, try Musella Valpolicella Superiore Ripasso 2011, Italy (£15.99, virginwines.co.uk).

Burgundy is the birthplace of great pinot noir, but this fickle grape travels well and has become the darling of the grapevine for New World winemakers, especially in New Zealand and California, where the quality commands a certain price tag.

A plush pinot from a boutique winery that's been singled out for making world class pinot noir, try Lowburn Home Block Pinot Noir 2011, Central Otago, New Zealand (£28.95, southdownscellars.co.uk) with a Sunday roast, duck breast or even pan-fried red mullet in season.

But for smaller wallets, a Californian pinot that's effortless to drink can be just as exciting and Edna Valley Vineyard 2012, Central Coast Pinot Noir, California, USA (£12.99, Majestic) would also suit

poached salmon with its delicate black cherry and plum fruit and earthy, cola spice flavours.



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