

The best sauvignon blanc to buy now



Jane MacQuitty

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Love or hate sauvignon blanc, no one could accuse the wine world of ignoring it. Next week a whole day will be dedicated to this crisp, sparky grape, with events from New Zealand to San Francisco. London will be smacking its lips over hundreds of sauvignons, with Berry Bros hosting a one-day New Zealand Wine School, with 13 wines and a four-course lunch at £195 a pop.

Sauvignon blanc might be the No 1 variety in the UK but it is a Marmite wine. My own gripe is not just the excessive sugar but the whiff of rotting grass from too many overripe bottles. Good sauvignon, on the other hand, with its acidity and zingy gooseberry, nettle and flowering currant pizzazz, is the perfect spring and summer white, tailor-made for tender vegetables. It is also the only white that can cope with the muskiness of English asparagus.

More sauvignon blanc is grown in Languedoc than elsewhere in France, and good bottles deliver this grape's oomph. Aldi's racy, green, flowering currant-scented, just 11.5 per cent alcohol Vignobles Roussellet Sauvignon Blanc, £4.69, is actually a Vin de France but no doubt contains a good wallop of Languedoc fruit. A notch up in intensity are the sauvignon blanc-based dry whites of Bordeaux, like the smoky-oaky, nutty, verdant 2014 Château Argadens, Wine Society (01438 741177) £8.95.

If you like crisp, aromatic whites, try one of the many different sauvignon blancs
Cindy Prins

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Vibrant, pure, fresh-as-a-daisy Loire sauvignon started the stampede for this grape, with big and now, alas, often overpriced names heading the charge. Marks & Spencer's bold, smoky, flinty, gooseberry-redolent 2013 Pouilly Fumé, Mathilde de Favray, £15 is one worth the money. If it has to be a passion fruit-licked Marlborough sauvignon, the bottles to buy are Aldi's nettle, white peach and guava-styled 2014 Freemans Bay Sauvignon, £5.89, or Tesco's surprisingly good white currant and blackcurrant leaf-charged 2014 Finest Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, £7.

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This week's best buys

2013 Red Leg Alentejo, white, Portugal

Tanners (01743 234455) £7.50, Adnams (01502 727222) £7.99

Nifty, spring-like, new wave Portuguese pair, with this unoaked, fresh, grapey, fruit salad white, enhanced with a dab of viognier, bristling with elegant, floral, citrus-zest fruit.

2013 Red Leg Alentejo, red, Portugal

Tanners £7.50, Adnams £7.99

Easy to sip, velvety yet punchy 14 per cent alcohol red, made from a mix of Portuguese varieties and crammed with delicious damson fruit.

2013 Iona Chardonnay, Elgin, South Africa

Marks & Spencer £15

Splash out on this classy Cape chardonnay for spring and summer swigging. Its smoky-toasty, French oak barrel-fermented and aged hazelnut fruit is a whizz with poached salmon.

2013 Vacqueyras, Domaine de la Curnière, France

Marks & Spencer £13

Bold, beefy, 50-year-old vine-sourced, leafy, surprisingly approachable, spring-into-summer southern rhône red, the usual mix of mostly grenache, topped up with syrah and mourvèdre.

The keeper

2006 Château Capbern Gasqueton, St Estèphe, Bordeaux, France

Majestic Wine Warehouses £17.99

Another Majestic small claret parcel gem that, like the others, will not hang around for long, so scoop up while you can this deep, rich, ripe, velvety, green olive and green pepper-stashed 2006, mostly cabernet sauvignon, with a one third dollop of merlot, plus a dash of cabernet franc. Although 2006 was a good, not great bordeaux vintage, this stylish, hearty, complex St Estèphe punches well above its weight, as you would expect from a château that is part of the third-growth Calon-Ségur stable. Too many vintages were sold off unceremoniously when Madame Capbern Gasqueton died in 2011; never mind, this forward 2006 is delicious drinking now, even better in a year's time.