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by Tom Cannavan, 04/15

Every month I taste a lot of wines that don't make it into my reviews here on wine-pages. Sometimes that's because the wines aren't good enough, but not always: often there just isn't space or a suitable opportunity to write about wines I really enjoy. So this quarterly series gathers together my tasting notes on a whole bunch of 'affordable wines' - in this case, more than two dozen of them. For the purpose of this exercise I class 'affordable' as wines costing up to £20.00. All are available from UK retailers, and many from international retailers too.

## under £8.00

### White wines

#### Asda, Extra Special Leyda Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2014, Chile

Made for Asda by Luis Felipe Edwards, fruit comes from the cooler, coastal Sauvignon hotspot of Leyda. Punchily verdant and vibrant on the nose, asparagus and green beans meet light tropical fruits, and a zesty lime peel touch. The palate is cool and balanced, with really zingy, crisp grapefruity freshness, tempered by more of that delicate passionfruit tropicality, and a long dry finish. Exemplary really, and deliciously a point for the lover of this vivacious style. 87-88/100. £, Asda

**Red Leg, Alentejo Branco 2014, Portugal** JP Ramos of the Alentejo produce a number of brands appearing under their own name, or bottled and labelled for retailers. Red Leg is one such brand, and this blend of the native Arinto and Antão Vaz with Viognier has an appealing nose of rosy red apple and lime, with a touch of almond and a little herbal nuance too. In the mouth it is quite fresh and zesty, fairly anonymous in some ways, but balanced and highly drinkable. 85/100. £7.99, Adnams, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

#### Casa Silva, Chardonnay Semillon 2013, Chile

A 50/50 blend that was once very popular in Australia, though less so from Chile, this comes from Colchagua, is screwcapped, has 13.5% alcohol and only a minor proportion of the Chardonnay sees some ageing in French oak. Citrussy, crisp and fruit-forward on the nose, there is a little succulent hint of honey or almond. In the mouth this is highly sippable, balancing the freshness of the fruit and acidity with a little bit of creamy generosity and texture, to create a nice aperitif or adaptable food wine. A touch of spice orangy intensity in the finish adds some seriousness. 87/100. £7.95, whitmoreandwhite.co.uk, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

### Red wines

#### ASDA Extra Special, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2013, Italy

Montepulciano is the grape variety for this wine coming from Eastern central Italy, unoaked and



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weighing in with 13% alcohol. It has a sleek and pretty black cherry and plum nose, with a little tobacco, before a palate that is, I suppose, a slight let-down: it is soft and quaffable enough but a bit thin, however it does have the cherry acids and freshness that will appeal to Italian fans, and is understandably fairly simple at the price. 83/100. £5.00, Asda.

#### **Ogier, Notre Dame de Cousignac Luberon 2013, France**

Exclusive to The Wine Society, but another Ogier wine grown on the border between the Rhône and Provence, and though undeclared on the label, made from similar grape varieties. It is darker and immediately seems more 'serious' and less open than the CdR, still with red fruits, but with a lightly leathery touch too. In the mouth certainly drier and more focused, tighter tannins though still ultimately easy drinking, but in a dry, savoury, and quite different style that needs food a little more I think. Only 12.5% alcohol. 85/100. £6.25, The Wine Society.

#### **Foncalieu, Le Versant Pinot Noir 2013, France**

Stylishly-packaged, attractive, but cheap Pinot Noir from France is hard to find so there's a lot to like about his from the giant Languedoc Foncalieu Co-op. Nice pale ruby colour, a soft and mellow nose of sweet berries, autumn leaves and gentle spice, then a strawberry palate of simple, sweet fruit with light body, balance and a hint of smoky oak. 86/100. £6.99 Hennings, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

**Red Leg, Alentejo Tinto 2013, Portugal** The red partner to the Red Leg Branco is a blend of Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez (Tempranillo), Trincadeira and Touriga Nacional is bold in colour and flavour, aromas of spiced plum and liquorice leading on to a dry, grippy palate, with a rustic tannic grip and plenty of savoury spice and dark fruit. Needs a stew or a steak to show at its best I think. 86/100. £7.49, Fraziers; £7.99, Adnams, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

#### **Ogier, Côtes du Rhône Reserve 2013, France**

A typical blend of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah, this from giant Ogier is a medium ruby colour and offers dry, lightly leafy scents of redcurrant and cranberry, with a gentle floral lift. In the mouth the red fruits are creamy and nicely fresh - ripe enough, but with a bit of cut and earthy dryness against the soft tannins. Fairly lightweight (12.5% abv) and finishing on a touch of spice, it is solidly gluggable without setting the heather on fire. 85/100. £7.49, The Co-operative, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

#### **The Mimic, Old Vine Shiraz 2013, Spain**

What the mimic is seeking to mimic in this wine from Jumilla is the full-on, sun-kissed richness of Australian Shiraz, so the recipe includes full ripeness and lashings of creamy French and American oak. Dense in colour, the aromas are vanilla and plum, some tobacco spice, and a hint of hot baked earth. In the mouth it is its sweetness that strikes first - the sweetness of really ripe fruit, perhaps a touch of residual sugar, but backed up by creamy tannins and juicy acidity, and good concentration. A very convincing impersonation indeed. 88/100. £7.95, Tom I'Anson Wines, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

## Fortified Wine

#### **Barbadillo, Solear Manzanilla Sherry NV, Spain**

A Manzanilla, made from the Palomino grape grown in Jerez, and aged in a solera system in the humid conditions around Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Tasted nice a cool from the fridge and from a white wine glass, this pale, 15% alcohol Sherry has the distinctive tang of briny sea air, as well as dry walnut husk and apple notes. On the palate it is dry but rich, again it is nuttiness that floods the palate here, with that fresh and vital saline acidity giving great length and proving once again what a stupendous bargain these wines are. 90/100. £4.75 per 37.5cl, Waitrose, Tesco and many independents: see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

# £8.00 to £12.00

## Sparkling Wine

#### **Filipetti, Prosecco Extra Dry NV, Italy**

Made from 100% Glera, this 11% alcohol sparkler does nothing wrong in terms of being fresh, sherbety, easy-going and crowd-pleasing, though it is fairly generic. Lemon, apple, and a frothy brightness, a bit of residual sugar adds to the quaffability for parties or summer in the garden perhaps. 85/100. £8.50, Broadland Wineries Direct.

#### **Tanners, Prosecco Brut NV, Italy**

A new own-label Prosecco for Tanners wine merchants, and quite a different beast from the Filipetti: a similar steady stream of good, small bubbles, but the nose is much more subdued, less flowery, but the real difference is on the palate which is very much drier in comparison, more focused on fine apple fruit, with a long and well-balanced finish. In pure wine terms, a superior product, but also more to my taste I confess. 88/100. £9.95, Tanners.

## White Wines

#### **Schlumberger, Alsace Riesling 'Les Princes Abbés' 2011, France**

A delightful if understated Riesling, this has stone-fruit aromas, lemon and gentle wax, peach down and stony minerals. On the palate it has a hint of being off-dry, with a clean, fruity palate, though whilst balanced, it perhaps lacks the last ounce of precision and pinging acidity of the very best examples. 88-89/100. £11.93, TheDrinkShop.com, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

#### **McGuigan, Shortlist Adelaide Hills Chardonnay 2011, Australia**

From one of the top regions for the new-look, cooler climate-style Chardonnay in Australia, this is fermented in new, large 'hogshead' barrels with wild yeasts and spends eight months in oak. The nose has the mealiness and typically quite 'muddied' but complex aromatics of wild yeast ferment, nuts, spices, earth, before a palate showing sweet and ripe apple and melon, with a lemon rind kick of

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acidity and certainly some grip: alcohol is a modest 13% but this has a hint of astringency that just touches the back of the throat. An interesting and quite complex wine, though not finishing as pure and delicate as it might. 88/100. Amazon.co.uk sell a three pack for £30.80 including delivery, also in Asda.com, Tesco.com, Majestic and Ocado at £14.00-£15.00.

## Red wines

### **Villa Maria, Private Bin Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon 2012, New Zealand**

From Hawkes Bay in the North Island, this light-weight 12.5% alcohol blend saw 12 months in oak. Light to medium colour and density, this has a cedary and tobacco quality, along with red berry fruits: some plum and dry redcurrant. On the palate it is balanced, with lots of coffee coming through, tobacco again, and nicely balanced berry fruits. It has a sense of lightness and elegance, without a lot of structure - but most enjoyable and would be good with everything from spring lamb to roast chicken. 87/100. £12.99, Majestic, on offer at £9.74.

### **Ogier, Heritages Côtes du Rhône 2013, France**

The Heritages name makes play of Ogier's 100 years of history, but is basically a marketing brand - not to be confused with Hermitage of course. Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, aged in large oak casks, there's a gentle creaminess to the nose, plush red and black summer berries, and just a hint of vanilla and spice. In the mouth it is firm and juicy, the fruit quite concentrated and noticeably more so than in the straight Côtes du Rhône. Plum and a touch of liquorice in a moderate finish that is dry and savoury. 87/100. £9.99 Morrisons.

**Sainsbury's, Taste the Difference Priorat 2011, Spain** The Grenache-based wines of Priorat, grown at altitude on slate soils close to Barcelona, can be some of the most profound in Spain. Old vine Grenache is joined by Syrah and Mazuelo in this wine, which has a dense, intense purple/black saturation, and very vivid and velvety berry and spice aromas: hints of clove and cedar as well as plenty of dark bramble fruit. Despite the 14.5% alcohol there is a bit of cut and freshness on the palate. Tannins are pretty soft and fine, acidity is fresh and cherryish, all off-setting the ripe fruit concentration and spice. 89/100. £10.00, Sainsbury's.

### **Villa Maria, Private Bin Marlborough Pinot Noir 2013, New Zealand**

Fruit is sourced from a number of vineyards in the Awatere and Wairau Valleys for this Pinot, which is partly fermented with wild yeasts, and I suspect sees ageing only in older oak. There's a rosemary, herby lift on the nose, bright cherry fruit, and a sense of sappy freshness. On the palate it is dry and savoury, a medium-bodied style of Pinot yet with a bit of substance and depth of colour (and 13.5% alcohol), it is typically Marlborough, balanced between 'pretty' and 'serious', and very enjoyable if just slightly flat in the finish. 88/100. £12.99, but on offer at £10.99 when you buy two, nzhouseofwine, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

### **Wakefield, Clare Valley Merlot 2013, Australia**

Wakefield is a model of consistency, with its varietal wines all excellent expressions. From their own vineyards, this is a Merlot with a bit of stuffing and serious intent, ageing in French and American oak adding layers of cedar, spice and coffee to rich fruits and a certain grown-up character of game and graphite. In the mouth there's plenty of juicy plum and cherry brightness, but that grippy, rustic core of spice and earth, smoothed by vanilla, is balanced and appealing. Will cellar for five to 10 years too. 89/100, £12.99, Majestic, but on offer at £11.04 currently.

# £12.00 to £20.00

## White Wines

### **Cantine Lunae, Vermentino 2013, Italy**

From the small DOC of Colli di Luni that straddles Liguria and Tuscany, fabulous, almost Gewurz fragrance, with flowers and exotic Turkish delight nuances, a lovely freshness. Pin sharp palate, loads of lemon and grapefruit, but just thrilling acidity and clarity. Superb and pinpoint stuff. 91/100. £13.99, Armit, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

### **Hatzidakis, Santorini Dry White Wine 2013, Greece**

From ancient vines and the volcanic soils of Santorini in Greece, this lemon-coloured wine has stony and lightly spicy aromatics, that hint of skin-contact richness and tannin, the palate beautifully sweet-fruited, with elegance and pure minerality into quite a long finish. The 2013 is now in stock in Tanners amongst others too, but this 2012 scores 89/100. £13.75, [shop.vinoteca.co.uk](#), see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

### **El Escoces Volante, El Puno Ha Ido Al Grano 2011, Spain**

Only 4000 bottles of this *Viño de España* are produced, being 100% Viognier it is not entitled to a DO classification. From a tiny vineyard at 950 metres, it is barrel fermented and spends 15 months on the lees in barrel. Toast is what powers the nose at first, but then such a rich, ripe apricot fruit and almost lanolin weight and waxiness, honey and almond. In the mouth it is richly textured and enveloping, but the sensory overload cut-off switch is acidity: bright, purposeful and adding a bittering twist. 92/100. £18.95, Cross Stobs Bottleshop, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#). see all

## Red Wines

### **Tyrell's, Lost Block Heathcote Shiraz 2012, Australia**

From the Heathcote region of Victoria, this 13.5% alcohol Shiraz offers soft, sweet, lightly chocolatey black fruit with just a hint of mint or eucalyptus. Fruity and smooth on the palate, it has a nice medium-bodied texture, though I thought the flavour dropped away a little bit rapidly, leaving dry tannins and acidity, but just not enough follow-through for the price. 86/100. £13.50, WineDirect, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

### **Viu Manent, 'Vibo' Punta del Viento 2011, Chile**

Adorned with a "94 Points" sticker (from Chilean wine magazine, Descorchados), this is a Rhône blend of 68% Grenache with 21% Mourvèdre and Syrah from the Punta del Viento zone of the Colchagua

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Valley. The wine was aged for 13 months in 2nd and 3rd-fill oak. Richly aromatic, there is spice and toast, game and bloody aromas abounding, but this is perfumed too, some floral notes and fresh-cracked white pepper lift. In the mouth this has substance and density, the solid berry fruits layered with cocoa and juicy cherry, silky tannins and a long, integrated finish. It's big stuff with its 15% alcohol, but does not seem too heavy or alcoholic. 91/100. £17.68, Spiritedwines, see all stockists on [wine-searcher](#).

**McHenry Hohnen, 3 Amigos Red 2010, Australia**

The excellent McHenry Hohnen are making some terrific wines from their Margaret River fruit, this being a blend of Shiraz, Grenache and Mataro (Mourvèdre) that's gently funky and hinting at volatility, lifted floral and vegetal notes, pepperiness too in a complex and inviting nose. On the palate lovely crushed blackberry fruit, a dark chocolate smoothness to the tannins and a full-bodied, slick mouthful that still has enough plummy rusticity to add interest. 90-91/100. £19.95, **Berry Bros. & Rudd**.

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