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WINES OF THE WEEK

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Paseo Red, Lisboa, Portugal 2014 (£5.75, Oddbins)

If you're looking for budget red wine in Europe it pays to head south. In Italy that might be Puglia, in France the Languedoc-Roussillon and in Spain the dusty plains of Castilla-La Mancha or the cluster of regions known as the Levant. The theory holds on the western reaches of the continent, too: the powerful but refined wines of the Douro and, to a lesser extent, the Dão, get most of the critical attention in Portugal – the country's equivalents of Bordeaux and Burgundy. But the easy-going reds of the south are where you'll find most joy if your budget doesn't stretch much beyond a fiver, Oddbins' Lisbon-sourced Paseo being a red plum-juicy old favourite of mine for this credit-straitened time of year.



Quinta de Chocapalha Tinto, Estremadura, Portugal 2010 (£11.95, Corney & Barrow)

The vineyards around Portugal's capital aren't only concerned with the simple, cheap and cheerful. At Quinta de Chocapalha, northeast of Lisbon, there's something more serious from the husband-and-wife team Paulo and Alice Tavares da Silva, whose daughter, Sandra, happens to be one of Portugal's most talented winemakers. Their house red, made from a mix of grape varieties including Portugal's finest Touriga Nacional, is a polished mix of lavender, damson and dark cherry. Their Reserva Vinha Mae 2010 (also available from Corney & Barrow,

£20.95) adds intensity, chunkier tannin and oak spice. Both have a seam of freshness that makes them intensely drinkable.



Ramos Reserva, Alentejo, Portugal 2013 (£9.99, or £6.66 in a mixed case of six bottles, Majestic)

The biggest and best-known southern Portuguese wine region is the Alentejo, a vast undulating plain (a third of the country's total area) sprinkled with the Mediterranean trinity of cork oaks, olive trees and vines. The star producer is João Portugal Ramos, a key figure in the renaissance of Portuguese wines since the 1980s. While his name is attached to many projects, it's his strikingly bright fruit-driven Alentejo reds that I find most rewarding. Both Majestic's Reserva blend and the similar Marques de Borba 2014 (£9.90, tanners-wine.co.uk) offer a deeply satisfying slick of warming dark plummy richness.

To read all David's columns in one place, visit theguardian.com/profile/david-williams