

	Welcome: Small World, Big Wines	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
Rose	<p>Chateau La Negly “La Natice” 2022 – A.O.P. Languedoc -SW France The Languedoc is one of the best regions in France to find quality wines at affordable prices – however the concept of “Cru” villages/terroirs have developed and some of the wines from those “crus” are now getting seriously pricey, fashionable and iconic as they find themselves on top restaurant wine lists. These include red wines from “La Clape” (a limestone “Massif” between Narbonne and the Med) produced by the prestigious and highly regarded “Chateau La Negly” one of which has scored 100 points – La Negly’s extravagant red, “Clos des Truffiers” is Euro 147 a bottle! - we tried one of Chateau La Negly’s more reasonably priced cuvees a few seasons ago.</p> <p>The Chateau is run by the Paux-Rosset family and was the Summer home of the Counts of Rosset - harvesting is done manually so they can be sorted to eliminate unripe grapes or botrytized or over ripened grapes to only use the very best grapes with great attention to the vineyard and its soil. The grapes of the La Clape terroir are renowned for their freshness and minerality.</p> <p>This wine should have a complex nose of Redcurrant, Strawberry, Banana (!) The mouth is round, elegant, balanced and delicate. In true French fashion, the back label tells you very little with no mention of grape varieties! – so I had to do a bit of digging on line! These are all red grapes and of course, grape juice itself is clear so the juice only spends a short time on the skins before it is run off to make the wine so it just gets a tinge of pink – the longer on the skins, the deeper the colour.</p> <p>The grapes are all classic red varieties of the Languedoc. The Chateau makes some top end red wines so I was intrigued to find its Rose offering on the shelves of the Co Op on an offer – which combined with Staff discount courtesy of Karen’s Mum and a special members discount weekend we got another 20% off this top end Rose bringing in a £13 bottle which would normally be well outside of budget for a very palatable £8.80 which is a bargain for a wine of this quality. But don’t just take your Convenor’s word for it, It has recently garnered a Gold Medal at the Concours des Grands Vins de France in Macon!</p> <p>Karen reprimanded me for bringing along a Rose to an autumnal wine tasting but I do know we have quite a number of Rose fans and I don’t think quality Rose should only be the preserve of the Summer months! – and a lovely aperitif to get us started. Apparently this is great with a “Zarzuela de Mariscos” – a spectacular Spanish Seafood stew (named after a genre of Spanish musical theatre which blends many styles of music and dance called Zarzuela) - and likewise this stew combines shellfish, cured pork, vegetables in a spicy tomato broth- apparently with almond paste mixed in to give a rich hearty stew so maybe that could be something to concoct for a chilly winter’s evening.</p>	Cinsault, Grenache, Mourvedre, Syrah	Co Op Normally £13.00 but on offer at £11.00 and less staff and members special weekend discount so £8.80 a bottle!(6 bottles) and one bottle at full price of £13.00 but net after staff discount of 10% = £11.70 as offer finished.

White	<p>Gruner Veltliner – Yealands Reserve – Marlborough, New Zealand 2022 Gruner Veltliner is the signature grape of Austrian white wines, where it gives crisp, white wines with an aromatic twist – it is considered to be a good alternative to zingy wines such as Muscadet or Sauvignon Blanc and goes great with oily fish such as mackerel.</p> <p>Here, the grape is grown in the Seaview Vineyard in Awatere Valley where high sunshine, cool nights and low rainfall intensify the grapes' flavour with a rich, textured palate layered with honey, pepper and spice, stone fruit and a mineral finish. Yealands was established in 2008 by Peter Yealands in an area previously considered unsuitable for wine making!- Yealands produce wines from Pinot Gris, Gewurtztraminer and Riesling – and blend combinations of those known as “PGR” – as well as the more familiar Sauvignon Blanc - and is the main producer in this sub region. This is no bargain basement wine and will go well with any fresh seafood – a Waitrose offer just about allowed us to indulge in this wine as we had some others at very palatable prices to offset this premium example.</p>	Gruner Veltliner	Waitrose, normally £11.91 but on 25% off all wines (periodic offer) so £8.93 a bottle (6 bottles) and one bottle at £11.91 full price
White	<p>Vernaccia Di San Gimignano DOCG “Acinaia” by Teruzzi 2022 – Tuscany, Italy We have possibly tried a Vernaccia di San Gimignano in the past – San Gimignano is a Tuscan town very well known for its Medieval “Manhattan” skyline as all the Town’s wealthier families decided to build Towers on their mansions and as is the way with these things, each family wanted to have the tallest tower, leading to these early medieval skyscrapers! At one point in the 14th century, there were 72 towers, one for each wealthy family but only 13 remain. Of course, nobody was allowed to build a tower taller than the Mayor’s! Karen and I went there on a road trip at least 35 years ago - but I do remember it well.</p> <p>The town’s name was apparently derived from the appearance of the eponymous Saint on the ramparts of the town, when it was under siege from the barbarians!</p> <p>Vernaccia di San Gimignano was the very first wine to be awarded DOC status in 1966 (think French Appellation Controlee) and was upgraded to the (theoretically) highest quality level for Italian wines, DOCG in 1993 (DOC or DoCG will normally appear in a band around the neck of the bottle on Italian wines, so categorised) There are other Vernaccia grape varieties found in Italy but they are not related to Vernaccia di San G.</p> <p>Apparently, Dante reckoned this wine led to Pope Martin IV becoming a glutton, as he developed a taste for eels pickled in it which sent him to purgatory in his Divine Comedy! Chaucer thought the wine was an aphrodisiac! - and it was often the wine of choice at Medieval weddings and Feasts. It should be a crisp, lemony wine with a bitter almond finish – this bitter finish makes it come into its own with Italian food such as a seafood risotto. Teruzzi is a top producer and was founded in 1974 by Enrico and Carmen Teruzzi in San Gimignano and in 2016 it was taken over by the Moretti family. It is very proud of its eco/bio credentials and sustainability. A Waitrose 25% off all wines event allowed me to bring this £10ish bottle well in our budget!</p>	Vernaccia di San Gimignano	Waitrose, normally £9.62 but less 25% off all Wine (periodic offer) so £7.22 a bottle (6 bottles) and one bottle at £9.62 full price as I had to go back to get an extra bottle some time after the offer!

Red	<p>Los Tontos Sabios – Vino de la Tierra de Castilla 2021 “Field Blend” – La Mancha, Spain This wine reinvigorates an old tradition in winemaking where the farmer would plant their vineyard with a wide selection of different grape varieties, often randomly, in a single vineyard. The grapes would be harvested and vinified together to make a wine.</p> <p>This is distinct from a farmer growing blocks of certain grape varieties and then blending them (or vinifying them separately and then blending the resulting wines) – for example a Chateauneuf du Pape or a New World wine may well consist of a number of grape varieties but it will not be a so called “field blend” as each variety will have been grown in different plots, harvested and dealt with/vinified separately before blending in often fairly rigid, percentages.</p> <p>Historically, the advantages to the farmer of a “Field Blend” were that it would be unlikely they would suffer a total crop failure – whether it was wet, sunny, dry or windy or the soil was less than ideal or there were pests or bugs, there was a good likelihood at least some of the varieties in their vineyard would thrive in the particular conditions each year and there would be some crop to harvest. In the past - it probably appears to us now as a romantic notion - the farmer simply wandered through their vineyard picking the grapes which had thrived with abandon and little concern as to what varieties they were – and then making a wine from them – these days, the winemaker is likely to be aware of the varieties they are picking but nonetheless, strictly, a “field blend” is still defined by the grapes coming from one single plot vineyard of mixed varieties.</p> <p>In theory, each vintage could be very different as it would depend on which varieties had thrived and formed the greater percentage of the resulting wine.</p> <p>In this case, we can be fairly comfortable this is a true “field blend” as it comes from old, off the beaten track vineyards, planted in a bygone era, in La Mancha, with the intention from the outset of making a field blend. Field blends happen to be very much “on trend” for 2023 and possibly the next big thing! – they are starting to appear in supermarkets and this example was selected by the Guardian’s Wine writer as a “deliciously gulpable, juicy and organic red with brambly fruit and soft tannins, ideal for BBQs” and an authentic example of the genre.</p> <p>Because the wines come from generally less productive vineyards, the prices tend to be a little higher and the wines can be less predictable, though more thrilling, than a uniform New World wine. There is no mention of grape varieties but I suspect Garnacha (Grenache will feature). There is a danger, if these catch on, that the larger wine producers may latch on and call straightforward blends a “Field Blend”.</p> <p>The name “Tontos Sabios” means “the wise fools” and is a reference to the farmers who planted these field blends, who were either very wise in hedging their bets by growing a wide variety of grapes in their vineyard - or fools for not concentrating on one or two productive varieties suited to their region</p> <p>This was one of 6 red wines from Waitrose listed as very good value by Jancis Robinson writing in the Financial Times in June 2023</p>	“Field Blend”	<p>Waitrose, normally £8.25 but less 25% off All Wines (periodic offer) so £6.19 a bottle (6 bottles) – and one bottle bought very recently at £7.32 (so I think it must have been on an offer).</p>
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Red	<p>“The Sardine Submarine” Vinho Regional – Tejo, Lisbon Portugal 2021 As you all know, occasionally Karen accompanies me on one of my “Hunter / Gatherer” trips to Admiral’s Park – whilst I take a very considered approach to selecting the wines, trying to tease out wines from the shelves that are made from interesting grapes and winemakers and terroirs with a story to tell, Karen’s approach is more simple but in truth, probably just as effective!</p> <p>In general terms, Karen has two criteria – has the wine got an interesting or funny name? Does the wine have an eye- catching, arty label? If both criteria are met, then, we are on to a winner and hence “The Sardine Submarine” – which I guess could otherwise have been called “The Yellow Submarine” but that probably is copyrighted by the Beatles!</p> <p>The “submarine” part of the name is a reference to Lisbon’s famous, yellow, streetcar trams that meander through the old town, through shady squares and up steep hills – a sort of above sea level submarine, if you like. And the “sardine” reference is an homage to the sardines that you see smouldering away on hot charcoal grills outside various eateries.</p> <p>However, I did not raise any objections to Karen’s selection, as Portuguese red wine is very unlikely to disappoint and in general terms represents exceptional value for money for a “different” wine – in 99% of cases it will be made largely from indigenous grape varieties rather than the producer slavishly using well-known international grape varieties and this really is Portugal’s USP - and often quite a number of those will be used in a blend – as the variety names mean little to us in the UK, they often don’t bother mentioning them on the label, as in this case.</p> <p>The Tejo region or Tagus, as we know it, covers the River’s delta, the Tagus being the huge river that flows through Lisbon and is crossed by a dramatic suspension bridge you go under if you are on a Cruise ship. We have also tried wines from the Alentejo but that is a separate region. This is likely to be a smooth wine to go with a hearty pasta dish – or of course grilled Sardines, if you can get them!</p> <p><i>(Due to unprecedented numbers at this Wine Discovery I had to go and get an extra bottle but Waitrose had sold out of Sardine Submarine locally so I opted for an alternative wine from the Co Op with very similar credentials and which has itself been recommended by many wine gurus in the papers and indeed we have tried a long time ago – “Porta Seis” – it also comes from the Lisbon region (but not necessarily the river delta) and also has a quirky label referencing those Lisbon yellow Streetcar Trams - which immediately caught Karen’s eye! – and it also happened to be on a great offer!)</i></p> <p>The “Sardine Submarine” was one of 6 red wines from Waitrose listed as very good value by Jancis Robinson writing in the Financial Times in June 2023, so, Karen is clearly on to something! Although in this case a Waitrose wine, if you do get a bit of a taste for Portuguese red wine, then do visit St Martins/or Bridge Co op Grande Marche as they have a (disproportionately) large number of great Portuguese reds to choose from, at good prices.</p>	None stated but very likely to be Castelao/ Trincadeira	Waitrose normally £7.33 but less 25% off All Wines (periodic offer) so £5.50 a bottle (6 bottles) - and one bottle of Porta Seis – near equivalent from the Co Op as Waitrose currently out of Sardine Submarine at both its stores! Normally £8.50 but on offer at the Co Op at £6.50 and less 10% staff discount so £5.85 net
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Red	<p>Cotes du Rhone A.O.C. “La Grange St Martin” 2020 (three bottles 2021) – Southern Rhone Valley, France A combination of Offers persuaded me to bring along this perennial classic from the Co Op – it often features in “Best wines at Supermarkets” lists and has the credentials of being associated with the Perrin family who are among the top winemakers in the Southern Rhone with their top notch “Chateau Beaucastel Chateauneuf du Pape”.</p> <p>Grenache is the principal grape variety of the Southern Rhone and this will likely dominate this wine – in the Northern Rhone, Syrah is king but it is often included in Southern Rhone blends. The red wines of the Northern Rhone are generally expensive – Cote Rotie, Cornas, St Joseph - those of the Southern Rhone, with the exception of top Chateauneuf du Pape, are far more affordable.</p> <p>“Cotes du Rhone” comes in three, theoretical quality levels – at the top, the so called Southern Rhone “Cru Villages” which are able to sell their wines under their own village name such as Lirac, Plan du Dieu, Sablet – then comes “Cotes du Rhone Villages” – wines from the better areas of the Cotes du Rhone but not in the Cru Villages – and then plain vanilla “Cotes du Rhone” which covers the rest! We have tried wines in the past from all three quality levels but to some extent these are theoretical! – a straightforward Cotes du Rhone from a good producer can be better than Cru Village wine – examples including Guigal’s plain vanilla Cotes du Rhone which many regard as a “baby” Chateauneuf du Pape.</p> <p>This too should be a quality Cotes du Rhone (as reflected in its normal price point and with the Perrin association) with some trademark pepper and spice and full bodied – great with winter warming casseroles and stews but equally happy alongside a simple Steak and Chips with a bit of garlic butter or Bearnaise sauce!</p>	Grenache, Syrah	<p>Co Op – normally £9.25 but on offer at £8.00 and we got both the special Members day discount of 10% plus 10% staff discount for retired staff members (thanks Karen’s Mum) so £6.40 net (4 bottles) and 3 bottles at £8.33 net each after staff 10% discount.</p>
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