

	Welcome: Simply having a Wonderful Christmas Wine	Grape Varieties	Cost £/Where from
Rose	<p>Chateau Terrebonne – Cotes de Provence, France 2022 Flushed with success after the reaction to our last Rose from Chateau Negly in the Languedoc, I thought it would be fun to bring along just one more Rose to try, so please indulge me! In any case Rose always makes a great Aperitif – maybe at this time of year, with some Festive party food nibbles? – this is described as a great, fruit forward Rose that can't be beaten for value – it was on an offer at the Co Op and then we got a further 20% off so it came in at a great price.</p> <p>It competes with other classic Cotes de Provence Rose's such as Chateau d'Esclans iconic "Whispering Angel"- and it even has a very classy bottle to boot! It also has that lovely pale onion skin colour which consumers now demand of a Rose. It has won numerous awards in the past. The Chateau Terrebone is midway between St Tropez and Aix en Provence on 140 hectares of oak forest, olive groves and Romans grew vines here. The vines are 40 years old and low yielding which give concentrated, high quality wine made by winemaker, Herve Sabardeil, who insists on harvesting the grapes at night to bring extra freshness.</p> <p>In the opinion of the wine gurus, this Rose has the substance and richness to enable it to match with either roast white meats or salmon – so if you like a Rose with your meal, why should Christmas be any different? This could easily accompany the Turkey or indeed a baked salmon.</p>	Cinsault, Grenache, Syrah	Co Op – Normally £12.50 but on special offer at £10.00 and then less a further 20% special staff discount so £8.00 net to the Group
White	<p>Macon – Villages A.C. – Cave de Lugny, Maconnais, Burgundy, France 2022 Perhaps unsurprisingly, the traditional white wine choice to go with the Christmas Turkey is a Burgundy white – This could perhaps mean an oaked Chablis with some nice rich buttery flavours or if the budget allows maybe a Meursault, or a St Aubin or Puligny Montrachet – but the problem is the price! – you will need deep pockets for these or any of the top name Burgundy whites and their nuances may be lost in the hubris of Christmas day Lunch.</p> <p>The usual place to hunt for affordable white Burgundy is the Maconnais in the South of Burgundy – the top wine in the Maconnais is Pouilly- Fuisse which you may well have heard of (not to be confused with Pouilly Fume which is from the Loire and made from Sauvignon Blanc) but again, this is not a bargain basement wine!</p> <p>In general terms the other white wines of the Maconnais fall into a hierarchy of three quality levels. Basic "Macon", then "Macon-Villages" and then Macon with the name of the Village where the grapes come from added – for example "Macon-Lugny", "Macon-Aze" etc. We have tried a beautiful "named village" wine, Macon-Lugny "Les Charmes" from Cave de Lugny in the past which is normally at the £15 level, although I notice Waitrose has it on offer at around £10 so if you like this one, do also search that one out as that is a very good price and a very good wine.</p> <p>This very well priced, middle tier, Macon Villages example is marketed under the Co Op's "Irresistible" range but you will see in very small writing that it is also produced by the Cave de Lugny, which is a top quality name in the Maconnais (a co operative representing 250 growers farming 1500 hectares of vineyard and who produce examples for many of the supermarkets as well as marketing under their own name) – we will learn shortly the importance and significance of looking for a quality producer on the label when buying any Burgundy wine. Macon Villages is often described as a good "entry level" white Burgundy – the</p>	Chardonnay	Co Op £10.50 but we got a 20% special staff discount so £8.40 to the Group (Five bottles) and one bottle at £

	<p>Waitrose equivalent to this Co Op Macon Villages (also produced by you guessed it, the Cave de Lugny) is around £12.50 so the Co Op have pitched this at a good price point.</p> <p>It was well priced, even at its shelf price but we managed to secure a further 20% off this, so, a bit of a Burgundian bargain! A little unusually for French Wine, the grape variety is actually prominent on the front label – unlike the New World, the French do not market their wines based on grape variety (partly on the basis a Chardonnay from the Languedoc may be very different in taste to a Chardonnay from Burgundy – or a Chardonnay from Chile!! - and in any event the French are obsessed with “Terroir” – i.e. the place it comes from rather than what grape happens to thrive there and is used in the wine. However, the French do have to be commercial, and if the average UK supermarket customer buys their wine based on grape variety, then this gives them an idea of what may be in the bottle – the name “Macon Villages” may well mean everything to an alumni of the U3A Wine Discovery Group but probably provokes a lot of head scratching to a supermarket customer staring at rows and rows of seemingly similar bottles of wine.</p> <p>The Grape here is as mentioned, Chardonnay, and this is the Grape behind all burgundy whites (the pedants amongst you are probably already muttering under your breath “but what about Bourgogne Aligote?” – however this makes a very niche wine that is most famous for being the white wine you should traditionally use to make a Kir with Crème de Cassis).</p> <p>This will be an unoaked example, peachy on the nose with some flinty freshness and a pinch of herbs – ripe citrus with a creamy, honeyed texture on the palate and maybe some tropical fruit and spice on the finish. It is that honeyed texture and rounded buttery mouth feel that is always welcome with a Christmas Turkey as it makes for a far more subtle, food friendly wine than, say, an NZ Sauvignon Blanc – however, as it is an unoaked wine, it should equally appeal to those who prefer their wines to have a bit of a mineral, citrus edge and this will also make it a great choice with fish, if Turkey is not your bag. It would also go well with some creamy, runny soft cheeses or indeed make a great starter wine with nibbles/party food from the supermarkets.</p> <p>An all-round Christmas Crowd pleaser. As mentioned, Waitrose has a similar example, also from the Cave de Lugny but this is about £3 or £4 more expensive. For those of you who want something a bit more “top flight”, with perhaps a bit of understated oak going on, then the next example may well be for you.</p>		
White	<p>Heggie’s Vineyard Cloudline Chardonnay 2022 – Eden Valley, South Australia As we had been able to provide a bit of Burgundian treat for our red wine fans this week, we wanted to be able to bring along a similar offering for our white wine disciples. The prices of big-name Burgundy whites are getting bonkers so it behoves us to look a little further afield for quality Chardonnay that is affordable (just about).</p> <p>Many of us are probably wary of Aussie Chardonnay – in the 90’s it was generally heavily oak influenced with often quite sickly levels of honey, rich vanilla and buttery flavours. The new wave of Australian Chardonnay is now far more restrained, with just a little oak influence to lift the wine. In this case we are promised that the wine will be far more about the fruit with aromas of quince and lemon zest with some flinty smoke, candied pear and a palate delivering a creamy stone fruit mix and only lightly oaked. Pale gold with green tints and a bit of grapefruit acidity and a saline tone with spice on the finish. The “cloudline” is a reference to the altitude of the vineyards.</p>	Chardonnay	Co Op £20.50 but we got a special 20% staff discount so £16.40 to the Group

	<p>The chap on the horse on the label is not Clint Eastwood -or Crocodile Dundee! – apparently, he is Colin Heggie, a grazier and larrikin who owned the Eden Valley property before selling it to his friend Wyndham Hill Smith in 1972 – the horse was called Jack, since you ask. He and Jack were well known in Barossa and after a night out, Colin would rely on Jack to carry him back to his Eden Valley home. (I get the feeling you think I am making this up and I confess I am typing this after consuming a generous amount of Chateauneuf du Pape) Wyndham planted the first vines in 1973 and the vineyard is located in Barossa’s high country. The current winemaker is Marc van Halderen, a South African.</p> <p>This gives us a bit of an alternative take on Chardonnay, in this case an oaked (albeit hopefully only lightly) example. As we have all got increasingly used to minerally, fresh white wines, a quality oaked Chardonnay can come as a bit of a shock to the system – indeed sometimes people can think the wine is corked or faulty in some way. This again was no bargain basement wine and it was great to have a bit more budget to play with to give it a go – and still a bargain in comparison to its Burgundy cousins! Hopefully something special to go with the Turkey!</p>		
Red	<p>Beaujolais Villages AOP “Reserve de Pizay”, Chateau de Pizay 2020 Beaujolais is very much the traditional wine choice to go with the Cold Cuts on Boxing Day (or “the leftovers” as the cold turkey and stuffing slices are unceremoniously referred to in the kitchen at Chez Winter) – it is a much lighter wine style than full throttle Burgundy, often fruity with a refreshing mouthfeel and is great to enjoy with a relaxing Boxing Day Lunch/supper after the excesses of the Main Event the day before – or, if you prefer a red wine that is a bit lighter and more fruity with the Christmas Dinner, then Beaujolais Villages is a good choice – and will also make a great quaffing wine if all you or guests fancy is a glass of quality red to go with a few nibbles while you watch the Bond Movie.</p> <p>Beaujolais is generally good value, especially for a quality French wine which is getting ever more expensive - and even more so for a red wine from Burgundy (although we tend not to think of Beaujolais as a Burgundy in the true sense – the region is some distance from the classic regions of Burgundy and the grape grown here is Gamay, not Pinot Noir (which is behind all the great Burgundy reds) – the reason is that Pinot Noir would struggle to grow in the granite soils of Beaujolais, whereas Gamay thrives).</p> <p>There are three theoretical quality levels of Beaujolais (ignore that 80’s sensation, “Beaujolais Nouveau” altogether! – although there have been some efforts to revive the concept, albeit with better quality) – i) basic “Beaujolais”, then ii) “Beaujolais Villages” which comes from the hilly northern part of the region and then at the top, iii) the so called “Beaujolais Crus”- Villages that can use their own name on their bottles, such as “Fleurie”.</p> <p>We have in the past tried examples of both the middle ranking “Villages” wines as well as those of the Cru Villages such as Fleurie. It is important to remember that the quality levels are theoretical - and an excellent grower may well be producing wines at “Villages” level that exceed those of a lesser producer in one of the named Cru villages! Our example is a Villages level wine from a good producer (and for those with a good memory we have tried it before but it perfectly fits the bill for our Christmas theme). I happened to notice that Waitrose has a “Beaujolais- Quincie” by Louis Jadot which is one of those villages whose own name can appear on wine made from grapes grown there for around the £10 level and that would be a great option at a good price.</p> <p>Beaujolais can be lightly chilled to bring out its fruit flavours and this makes for a very refreshing wine. There is a great story on the back of the bottle on how it found its way to the Co Op. The Chateau is absolutely stunning with extensive manicured topiary gardens if you look it up on the internet and runs as a boutique hotel with large spa, gourmet restaurant, wine courses</p>	Gamay	Co Op £11.50 but we got a 20% discount on a special staff discount day so £9.20 net to the group.

	<p>run in the vineyards – the first Seigneur of Pizay commenced construction of the Chateau in 1030 AD and his direct descendants continued to own and live in it until 1916 and it now forms part of a Hotel group. It has 80 hectares of vineyards and as well as its “mere” Villages and basic Beaujolais wines it also produces wines that can be sold under the Village Cru names of Regnie, Morgon and Brouilly – it has one of the highest European Environmental certifications and organic status since 1996 and the vines are 40 years old.</p> <p>This promises to be an exceptional Beaujolais at an affordable price with our discounts from a top producer also producing Cru wines from parts of the vineyard that fall into those Appellations. It does however seem to have gone up a bit from when we last tried it!</p> <p>When we met Olly Smith, he said he thought Beaujolais represented one of the best value wines on the market- with Burgundy credentials.</p>		
Red	<p>“La Courbe” – Les Celliers de Vetroz, Canton of Valais, Switzerland 2022 It is very unusual to find Swiss wines for sale in the supermarkets here – in a former life, I worked for Credit Suisse locally and found myself “volunteered” to represent the Guernsey office at what was supposed to be a bit of team building exercise over the course of a fortnight - travelling around Switzerland with various colleagues from far flung outposts of the Swiss Bank to visit various branches of the bank in Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich and other Swiss Towns and cities – I can assure you that when you have been inside one Swiss Bank you really didn’t need to experience two weeks’ worth!</p> <p>However, the trip did have its highlights – there were some top restaurants, private night time sightseeing tram rides around various cities and more importantly and of considerably more interest and fun, a visit to a Vineyard! – as I recall the wine was excellent - and consumed in a considerable quantity leading to much levity – and much to the consternation of our Swiss hosts. The Swiss seem to keep their wine to themselves and I could not resist bringing this “find” along to the Group – Its Swiss credentials seem to fit in nicely with a Wintry, Christmas theme and it is supposedly good to enjoy with a few segments of Toblerone!</p> <p>This comes from the region that borders France and hence the name, by which the region was known when it was previously French. Although a Pinot Noir based wine, it is also blended with a local Swiss variety, Gamaret so it will not have refined Pinot Noir flavours and will be something probably a bit more earthy and spicy. Gamaret is a cross between Gamay and Reichensteiner grape varieties and is also a distant relative of Pinot Noir. Curiously, it does not seem to have a vintage year on the bottle but I understand it is 2022. It is part of the Co Op’s premium “Irresistible” range and was not exactly bargain basement although our discounts brought it in at a great price for a Swiss Wine which like everything Swiss is not generally cheap!</p> <p>There should be some cranberry and rose potpourri on the nose (great for Xmas) with blackberry and dark cherry on the palate with those earthy spices – and cocoa notes on the finish – hence the Toblerone recommendation, no doubt! Whether it will go equally well with the Quality Street we will let you discover but it is fun to bring something a little different along!</p> <p>The Celliers de Vetroz who make this wine have 5 hectares on steep slopes is run by 5 brothers and sisters – they produce a stable of Gamay, Pinot Noir and local variety wines including some top end “Grand Crus”</p>	Pinot Noir, Gamaret	Co Op £9.50 but we got a 20% discount on a special staff discount day so £7.60 net to the Group

Red	<p>Savigny-Les-Beaune A.O.P., JJ Girard, Cote d’Or, Burgundy, France 2019 The traditional wine choice to accompany Christmas Day Turkey is a quality Burgundy Red – that said, with all the herby flavours of the trimmings of stuffing, pigs in blankets and goose fat roast potatoes there are other wines such as Rioja, Chateaufort du Pape and the wines of the Northern Rhone and quality Australian Shiraz that make great choices and New Zealand Pinot Noir can be a little less expensive than a top end Burgundy but a quality one is not going to be a bargain.</p> <p>Prestigious Burgundy red wine typically comes from the heart of the region, the Cote d’Or - which in turn comprises the prestigious sub regions of Cote de Nuits and Cote de Beaune. Prices for the more prestigious Appellations within both these regions such as Gevrey Chambertin, Nuits St Georges and many more are getting into the stratosphere – a bottle of Domaine Leroy Musigny Grand Cru will set you back £38,200! (from a merchant not in the restaurant) - for Christmas lunch don’t necessarily feel you need to serve an absolute blockbuster of a wine - if you have a crowd, it is unlikely most guests will appreciate the subtle nuances of your expensive Burgundy Grand Cru wine amid the crackers, chatter and brussels sprouts! Keep that bottle back to enjoy yourself!</p> <p>So, whether you choose to push the boat out for the special day or keep back that nice bottle to indulge in and savour over the holidays at a quieter moment, our brought forward surplus allowed us to seek out a quality Burgundy Village wine to bring along to this week’s Wine Discovery, from a highly respected producer and named Village (see below for the significance of this!) – normally at least double our budget, our discounts helped a bit. That said, this is wine is, in Burgundy terms, very good value for money and after discounts not at much of a premium to some generic Burgundy reds so you may yet take the option to go for gold at Christmas Lunch !</p> <p>Burgundy wine is very much characterised by the concept of “negociants” – unlike Bordeaux where you typically get a wine from a specific vineyard, Chateau/Domaine, in Burgundy ownership of vineyards is fragmented with very few growers able to produce enough grapes in each Appellation they grow in to make a single vineyard offering (although there are some wines that carry the name of the vineyard on the front of their label, some of which are designated Premier or Grand Cru vineyards and these obviously command a premium). “Negociants” select and buy grapes from growers to make effectively a house blend of that year’s grapes from many growers in a specific AOP.</p> <p>Hence, you often see Burgundy wines sold under the name of say Louis Latour, Louis Jadot rather than Chateau this or that. It is therefore the case, that the skill and reputation of the négociant/ producer is just as important to the final quality of the wine as the Burgundy Village or vineyard the grapes come from. A wine from a top vineyard or Village in the hands of a mediocre producer can, in theory, be less than a generic AOC Bourgogne wine from a top Negotiant.</p> <p>The bottle shape is of course obligatory for Burgundy wine, historically differentiating it from Bordeaux Claret in its tall, slender bottle – although of course both bottle shapes are now used indiscriminately for all manner of New World and indeed other French and European wines. The grape, as for all Burgundy red wine, is Pinot Noir (pedants may point to Gamay but Beaujolais is for all intents a region in itself).</p> <p>J J Girard is the seventh generation to cultivate vines in Savigny Les Beaune. In the Burgundy wine quality hierarchy, this is a so called “Village” wine – that is, it comes from one of the 45 Villages or Appellations entitled to be labelled and marketed under</p>	Pinot Noir	Co Op £21.00 but we got a 20% special staff discount so £16.80 to the Group
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	<p>their own Village name. Below this level, you have the much wider and general Appellations of “AOC Bourgogne” and those which cover larger areas of Burgundy, e.g. “Macon”.</p> <p>The vineyards for this wine are located between the hills of Corton and the village of Beaune on terroir of limestone topped with clay and pebbles. The next level up are those wines which also show the name of the individual vineyard they have been sourced from which additionally may be designated as Premier Cru or Grand Cru vineyards at the very top end on their label.</p> <p>The wine will have been aged in oak barrels for 15 months. It has deep cherry red colour and is supple and fruity. It has the benefit of being approachable in its youth unlike some very top end Burgundies but has ageing potential – this has a few years bottle age as well.</p> <p>Please don’t get too much of a taste for this – we can’t afford to bring such examples along to every event! You will probably pick up on two themes from my ramblings – that in general terms, Burgundy is an expensive wine and that it is a complex region to get to grips with in terms of understanding what the label actually means! However, at their best Burgundy’s reds can be hauntingly perfumed, silky and exquisite and there are no shortage of aficionados willing to shell out the big bucks for them.</p>		
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