

wine

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Hidden FRANCE

Great value wines to buy
off the beaten track

Seductive Italian
wines for summer

Priorat – Spain's
world-beating reds

SANTA BARBARA
Pinot Noir capital
of California?



First glimpse of the new 2002 Mosel-Saar-Ruwer Rieslings – 60+ wines rated



SIMON WOODS, *Wine International's* expert taster and global wine judge, uncorks thousands of bottles as he scours new releases to highlight the most interesting wines for you to try each month. See p90 for stockists key

two for the cellar



**Bassermann-Jordan
Deidesheimer
Hohenmorgen Riesling
Auslese 2002 Pfalz,
Germany**
£16.45 @ WBN

Established in 1718, Weingut Geheimer Rat Dr Von Bassermann-Jordan (to give it its full name) is something of an institution in the Pfalz and, along with the equally venerable von Buhl and Bürklin-Wolf, forms one third of the three famous 'B's' of the region. Wine quality may have dipped at the estate in the last part of the 20th century, but it is back on course now since the arrival of cellar master Ulrich Mell in 1997. This Auslese from the splendid 2002 vintage is a stunner with a long life ahead of it. There's a wealth of fruit – guava, quince, apricot and orange – and an almost creamy texture, but there's also a steely, mineral edge and a backbone of zesty acidity.

Drink 2003-2020

96 points



**Montana Tom
1998 Hawkes Bay,
New Zealand**
£40 @ selected WTS

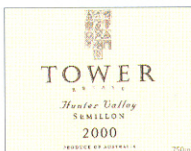
Is this the finest wine that New Zealand has ever made? Montana's

Hawkes Bay winemaker, Tony Pritchard, has been working closely with the Cordier group of Bordeaux since 1991, and those who have followed the Church Road Cabernet/Merlot will have seen an impressive surge in quality over recent vintages. Tom, named after Tom McDonald who pioneered red wine production in New Zealand, is the best that Tony and his team can do, and is only produced in good vintages. The 1998, a blend of 50% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon and 22% Cabernet Franc, is the third release and it's a supremely confident and complex wine. The flavours – blackberries, blackcurrants, spicy (French) oak, leather, olive and more – are delightful, but the structure of ripe tannins and fresh acidity is just as impressive, while the long, savoury finish keeps you coming back for more.

Drink 2003-2013

96 points

don't miss these

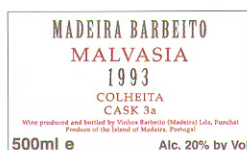


**Tower Estate
Semillon 2000 Hunter
Valley, Australia**
£11.99 @ LAI

A very welcome newcomer to the First Taste pages, this will not be the last time that you see wines from Tower Estate described here, if the quality of the current crop of wines is anything to go by. Tower is owned by a 13-man consortium headed by Mr Australian Wine himself, Len Evans. The winery is based in the Hunter Valley but the winemaker, Dan Dineen, has access to fruit from all over Australia. The result is a classy portfolio of about ten wines including a Coonawarra Cabernet, Shirazes from the Barossa and Hunter Valleys, a Clare Valley Riesling and this sprightly Hunter Semillon. This is a real classic Aussie Semillon, packed with toast, honey, cream and custard flavours, and with a long pithy finish.

Drink 2003-2015

94 points



**Barbeito
Malvasia
Colheita Cask
3a 1993
Madeira,
Portugal**

£17.95 for 50cl @ THC, RBS, HAX

If you'd like to try this, you'd better move quickly – just 549 half-litre bottles of this tangy young Madeira were made. The emphasis at Barbeito is on purity, so the wines are made without any adjustments in acidity and colour, and are aged without any artificial heat to accelerate the maturation. Moreover, Cask 3 in Warehouse 'A' at Barbeito's headquarters was bottled without fining and filtration. And the wine is quite delightful. It's lightly sweet, with intense citrus, raisin and nut flavours and very long piercing finish. Don't wait for Christmas; here's a Madeira that will lift the spirits at any time of the year – it was a treat lightly chilled on a rare sunny evening in June. And if Cask 3a has run out, fear not: Barbeito plans to bottle more single casks in the near future.

Drink 2003-2020

95 points

great value



**Tesco's Finest
Reserve Sauvignon
Blanc 2002 South
Australia**
£4.99 @ TOS

The cool but dry 2002 vintage in Australia yielded some of the best white wines the country has ever seen. There are many fabulous Rieslings, Semillons and Chardonnays, but the temperate conditions have also led to some rather tasty Sauvignon Blancs. Here's one of the best value ones you'll find. It's pungent but not too pungent, with fresh lime, guava and passionfruit flavours, a slightly chalky edge and a long, pithy finish. And if you're not near a Tesco store, look for the similarly toothsome 2002 Deakin Estate Sauvignon (£4.99 @ ODD).

Drink 2003

89 points



**Labeye
Minervois
Cuvée
Gauthier 2001
Languedoc
France**
£5.59 @ ODD

They're slightly more expensive than the 2000 vintage, but Edouard Labeye's Minervois reds are still superb value. Cuvée Guilhem (£5.59; drink 2003-2005; 92 points) is a fresh inky Syrah with classy plum and orange peel fruit that could pass for something far more pricey from the northern Rhône. It's refreshing in a way that very few places in the world could emulate. This Cuvée Gauthier is made from the much-derided grape, Carignan. It's a refreshing slug of southern French herb-tinged fruit, with hints of pepper, earth and berries. Once again, it scores for its sheer drinkability. Both wines are ideal barbecue fodder – food-friendly, sensibly priced and very tasty.

Drink 2003-2005

91 points