



Have you chosen your Christmas bubble yet, or are you planning to keep your head down this festive season and keep options open for a big party at Easter?

Whatever your plans, you will need some wine to keep you company and to go with the festive food, even if the gathering may be smaller than usual.

Here are my suggestions for reds that will take you through December, Christmas and into January.

£8 and under

The Best Douro Red, Portugal, Morrisons, down from £8 to £6 until January 1: These grapes could go to make port but instead they produce a ripe, juicy blueberry-filled wine that goes perfectly with meaty pasta and lamb tagine.

Fairtrade Carmenère 2019, Chile, Co-op, £6: Lush, plummy flavours that are soft enough to enjoy on their own but also go well with pasta and pizza. Fairtrade supports farm workers and their children to get an education, so the wine doesn't just taste good, it does good too.

Albert Road Pinot Noir 2019, Western Cape, South Africa, Waitrose, down from £9.49 to £6.99 until December 29: From top winemakers Duncan Savage and Thys Louw who together source grapes from high-density, low-yielding vineyards. This has an amazing aroma of juicy, red berry fruit and a touch of herbs with a palate that has structure and finesse. Try it with grilled duck breast.

Journey's End Identity Shiraz 2020, South Africa, Sainsbury's, down from £9 to £7 until Tuesday: There is something about the exuberant fruit and easy style of this wine that makes it a good choice from Tuesday to Saturday. And the trebuchet on the label in this unprecedented year makes me smile.

Chapoutier Côtes du Rhône Villages 2019, Tesco, down from £9 to £7 until Monday: This is a proper Côtes du Rhône with deep-flavoured, pepper-dashed blackberry fruit and enough backbone to stand up to a steak.

Ch. Chantemerle 2017, Médoc, Bordeaux Cru Bourgeois, Aldi, £7.49: From an elegant left-bank chateau, this is



Darker pleasures

With Christmas just around the corner, here are some red wines you might want to stock up on.

60 per cent Cabernet Sauvignon filled out with 25 per cent Merlot and a splash of Cab Franc and Petit Verdot. It is serious elegant claret, still youthful but drinkable now. Buy several bottles.

Classics Chianti Riserva 2017, Marks & Spencer, £8: This supple, cherry-filled Chianti has a dusting of herbs and dark, coffee-bean complexity.

Sangiovese-based, it has spent 12 months on oak, which is enough to give depth without splinters. Perfect with pasta and lamb.

£8 to £12

Ch. Belvue 2015, Cuvée l'Emotion, Bordeaux, Field &

FESTIVE FORESIGHT: Main picture above, picking grapes in the Roussillon; inset left, Virginia Willcock, winemaker at Vasse Felix.

Fawcett, down from £10.95 to £8.95: A super wine from the Sichel family, and now "à point" for Christmas drinking with supple tannins and cassis fruit.

Baden Spätburgunder 2019, organic, Lidl, £9.99: Spätburgunder is Germany's Pinot Noir and this one is rather good. Silky, slightly spicy and creamy, team it with a turkey and cranberry sandwich.

Princes de France Gigondas 2018, Aldi, £9.99: Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre grapes combine to give deep damson flavours, edged with spice and liquorice.

Famille Perrin Vinsobres 2017, Rhône, France, Booths, down from £14 to £10 until January 3: Dark blackberry fruit, layers of cherry, spice and supple tannins

from one of the top villages of the Rhône. Pour alongside a substantial winter dish of beef, lamb or spicy sausages.

The Footbolt Shiraz d'Arenberg 2018, McLaren Vale, South Australia, Tesco, down from £12 to £10 until Monday:

Over a century ago, the d'Arenberg winery was founded on the strength of winnings from a horse called Footbolt. This is 100 per cent Shiraz made in traditional open-top fermenters, and it nods towards St Joseph with its dark red fruits layered with liquorice and aniseed.

Vasse Felix Filius Cabernet Sauvignon 2018, Margaret River, Western Australia, Booths, down from £13 to £11 until January 3: From one of my favourite Western Australian wineries, not least because of the no-nonsense, perfectionist attitude of winemaker Virginia Willcock. Cool ocean breezes sweep into the Margaret River region keeping fresh acidity

balanced with deep, red fruit flavours and silky structuring tannins.

Calmel & Joseph Côtes du Roussillon Villages 2017, Martinez Wines, on offer at £11.19, normally £13.99: I am amazed at the consistent quality and character of wines produced by Laurent Calmel and Jérôme Joseph. This is made from Syrah, Carignan and Grenache and it has chunky black fruits laced with spice and herbs.

£12 to £20

Domaine de Valmoissine Pinot Noir 2017, Louis Latour, Bon Coeur Fine Wines, £13.28: Excellent value 100 per cent Pinot Noir made by Burgundian négociant Louis Latour. The grapes come from the hills of southern France where sunshine is tempered by high altitude, producing a wine with ripe cherry and raspberry-laced fruit and velvety tannins. Pour this alongside roast chicken, pink lamb cutlets or duck.

Ch. Maris Les Planels Organic, Waitrose, down from £17.99 to £13.99 until December 29: Made by organic and biodynamic devotee Bertie Eden, this has chunky fruit and smooth tannins with just a whiff of sage and thyme. Great with tomato-based dishes, red meat and cheese.

Moulin à Vent 2017, Ch. des Jacques, Beaujolais, France, Sainsbury's, down from £16 to £14 until January 1: Serious Cru Beaujolais with intense, ripe, spice-edged cherry and raspberry fruit, smooth tannins and a fresh tasting finish.

Esk Valley Pinot Noir, 2018, Marlborough New Zealand, York Wines, £15.95: From blustery sites in the Wairau and Awatere Valleys where cool temperatures and long sunny days produce grapes packed with bright, juicy, red plum and cherry fruits with depth of flavour and a long finish.

Cune Imperial Rioja Reserva 2016, Spain, Co-op, £19.75: Head to the Co-op for the best price I can find for this top-class Rioja. Old vines, masses of mulberry and blackberry fruit, edged with spice and with silky suppleness, this is an excellent Sunday lunch wine. Drinking well now but will keep another five years at least.

Max 2016, Miles Mossop 2016, Stellenbosch, South Africa, Roberts & Speight, £19.99: Miles Mossop is one of South Africa's star winemakers. This is a Bordeaux blend, aged for 22 months in French oak and it is supple with elegant blackcurrant fruit and a savoury



wine club offer

SATURDAY NIGHTS IN – 12 BOTTLES FOR £85

Whether you manage to get your allotted number of people around your table this month, or just settle for a quiet Christmas there will be no excuse for skimping on the wine. This case will see you through December and the festive season, with fizz, whites and reds providing flavours for weekdays, weekends and the big event. There will be no parties this Christmas, but fizz should definitely be on the schedule. This pink Prosecco is one of the first to be allowed by new legislation, and it is delicious.

This 12-bottle case should cost £109.88 but the Yorkshire Post price is

just £85. Delivery costs £9.95 for a single case but if you order two cases to the same address, it is free.

How to order: Online, just google "Yorkshire Post Wine Club" and the offer pops up, or go to www.houseoftownend.com/yorkshire-post-wine-club. You can also ring our order line on 01482 638888, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Outside this time, leave a message including your



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telephone number and we will ring you back. There are 12 bottles in this case, two each of:

Fizz: Pure Prosecco Rosé, Italy – summer fruits and gentle bubbles.
Whites: Shelter Bay Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand – zesty and zingy, gooseberry and passion fruit; Rioja Vega Blanco 2019 – unoaked, juicy citrus with a dash of herbs.

Reds: Organic Amigo de la Tierra Garnacha Tempranillo 2019, La Mancha, Spain – organic and vegan, full of juicy black fruits and plums; Sangiovese 2019, Ca' Tesore, Puglia – soft and sunny Sangiovese with raspberry fruit; Ch. Moulin de Mallet 2016, Bordeaux – every Christmas needs a claret.

off the shelf

Kylie Minogue Rosé, 2019, Vin de France, 12.5%, Tesco, down from £9 to £7 until December 7:

Pink wine just makes us all think of spring, and life will be better then, so pour a glass of Kylie's crisp, strawberry-scented wine and fast-forward to sunshine.



Les Pionniers Champagne Brut, France, 12%, Co-op, down from £19 to £15 from Wednesday until January 1:

Last week I encouraged you all to join the Co-op because this stunning offer is for members only. Non Co-op members must pay £18 for this delicious, creamy, toasty champagne.



The Best Uco Valley Malbec 2017, Argentina, 13.5%, Morrisons, down from £12 to £8 until December 31:

From high-altitude vineyards, this is a silky, elegant, damson and blackcurrant style of Malbec. Team it with meaty casseroles or steak.



Quinta do Noval 10-year-old Tawny Port, Portugal, 19.5%, Waitrose, down from £24.99 to £19.99 until January 3:

A mid-afternoon style of port with bags of figgy fruit, orange peel and a smooth, balanced finish. Accompanies a piece of cheese, a slice of fruitcake and a lazy afternoon watching Netflix.



on the grapevine

Pore over Portugal: Author Richard Mayson is the go-to person for any information and opinion on Portuguese wines and so it is hardly surprising that this new addition to the Infinite Ideas series of wine books is so comprehensive. *The Wines of Portugal* is his third book on the country and I have used previous editions as references over the years. Mayson has not only explored



Portugal's vineyards but has had several years' experience of owning a vineyard and making wine. He takes a customary turn around the history of Portugal and its wines, but brings the reader right up to date with grapes, regions

and producers. Divided into Atlantic, Mountain, Plains, and Islands, this is a sensible way to introduce regions before using some of the difficult-to-pronounce regional names. *The Wines of Portugal*, £30, is a book written with confidence, knowledge and style and since there is the prospect of travel resuming in 2021 it might make a good Christmas present for any lover of Portugal and its wines.

On the road: David Lawson at Chez Vin Otley continues to send out his delivery itineraries every week. If ever there was a small independent merchant working hard to deliver

wine during this crisis, it is this one. If you live anywhere near the areas where he "runs out to", which include Menston, Guiseley, Harrogate, Saltaire, Ilkley and places in between, email davidchezvin@aol.com to get on his list.

Chocolate Orange gin: Perfect for Christmas stockings is York Gin's interpretation of the classic Terry's Chocolate Orange. York Gin has combined the taste of quality chocolate and zesty orange in a fine, dry gin, that still manages to have notes of juniper mingling with the top notes. Enjoy it poured over ice with a twist of orange peel, priced £39 a bottle. Check the website www.yorkgin.com for online orders or call into the shop in York.