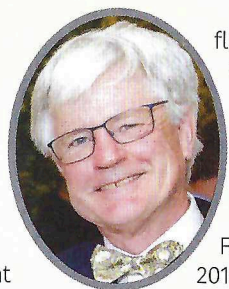




## FESTIVE WINES FOR THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

The twelve days of Christmas have long been a period of present giving and receiving as Christians commemorate the birth of Jesus. By the 18th century, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" had become a popular carol and rhyme, and it has set me thinking about what twelve bottles one might choose as gifts for each day over this period. For the curious, totalling all the gifts given in the song would mean giving 364 bottles. Here I am just going to think of twelve bottles to be given and received as gifts, one for each day, but ensuring that each comes from a different wine region! What would I choose?

**For Christmas Day** it has to be something to go with the meal. Assuming the food is traditionally rich, I would opt for the Benguela Cove Vinography 100% Petit Verdot from South Africa. This unusual wine is powerful, but elegant, with dark fruit and spicy aromas, and an evolving complex set of



flavours. The 2020 is a bit young, but hold on to it for future years.

**Second Day:** will need to be something light and refreshing. It's time to head to eastern Italy and enjoy Andrea Felici's Verdicchio 'Vigna' Il Cantico della Figura Riserva dei Castelli di Jesi, 2018. This pale golden wine has

intense floral, mineral and herbal aromas, and rich long lasting flavours. It is beautifully balanced in the palate.

**Third Day:** Christmas would not be complete without a bottle of port, but choosing which one is a challenge. Part of me would go for a nice 20-year-old tawny, but on balance it has to be a gift of vintage port. The 1977s are drinking nicely, and I have always enjoyed Fonseca's wines.

**Fourth Day:** time for some steak, and few wines go better with it than a powerful, but elegant, Argentinian Malbec such as Catena's Adrianna Vineyard Fortuna Terrae 2018, with its rich berry flavours and complex smooth tannins.

**Fifth Day:** after the Malbec, we will need something with higher acidity and freshness, and nothing suits more than a top quality, relatively low-alcohol Riesling from the Mosel. I opt for one of J.J. Prum's gorgeous wines, the Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese 2011 at only 7.5% alcohol, with complex tropical fruit, nuts and creamy aromas, and sharp citrus acidity on the palate to balance the sweetness.

**Sixth Day:** I would



MEURSAULT

choose something less well known, and opt for a Georgian Saperavi, such as the oak-aged Saperavi Barrel by Giuaani from as old a vintage as you can find, with its aromas of plums, spices and a touch of tobacco.

**Seventh Day:** for New Year's Eve it has to be a top quality champagne. It's difficult to beat the very pricy Dom Pérignon from Moët & Chandon or Comtes de Champagne from Taittinger, but as an alternative, try Bruno Paillard's Assemblage 2015.

**Eighth Day:** I love the purity and complexity of Petite Arvine, and few make it better than Caroline Frey's La Petite Arvine de Mon Jardin Secret, 2021, with its complex tropical fruit, citrus and mineral flavours, lively acidity and exotic flavours.

**Ninth Day:** time for a great red wine, and for this I choose the Barolo Bricco Rocche 1998 from Ceretto, with its depth and complexity, beautiful perfumes, and gentle, rounded tannins.

**Tenth Day:** I can never stray far from Burgundy for long, and especially from Meursault, and few gifts could be better than the Lafon Genevrières from a good vintage such as 1996 or 2005.

**Eleventh Day:** I must share some wine made by a friend in Australia. I helped pick the grapes for Bloodwood's 2022 rich and intense Cabernet Franc, with its floral and raspberry aromas, and deep blackcurrant and slight leathery flavours – this would make a perfect gift.

**Twelfth Day:** it would be remiss not to include something from Spain. A fine sherry would make a good gift, but a special one would be the 2017 Mas de la Rosa, Vinyes Velles from Priorat by Torres.

### MORE AFFORDABLE FESTIVE WINES FOR GIVING (please drink responsibly)

#### LOCAL FAVOURITES

Château Capbern, St Estephe (France) 2020, 14.5%. Good Claret is always a welcome present, and this

Cabernet Sauvignon (69%), Merlot (29%), Cabernet Franc (1%) and Petit Verdot (1%) blend has ripe black fruits and savoury oak spice flavours. It is ready to drink now but will keep well (Laithwaites, £28, but **reduced to £23 if you present a copy of this magazine at the store**).

#### SLIGHTLY FURTHER AFIELD

**Cave de Lugny, Crémant de Bourgogne (France) nv, 11.5%.** A good, crisp sparkling wine to take with you to a New Year's Eve party (Waitrose, £17).

**La Garnatxa Fosca, Priorat (Spain), 2021, 15%.** Part of the Proyecto Garnachas de España project, this delicious and complex (cherries, cedar, herbs, minerality) wine is made from old vines grown in slate soils (Majestic, £18 mixed six, **reduced to £17 mixed six if you present a copy of this magazine at the store**).

**Morrison's Ruby Port (Portugal) nv, 20%.** Morrison's make a habit of offering very good value port and this is no exception. Made for them by Symingtons, it tastes of rich dark cherries, with a touch of chocolate (Morrison's, £9.50).

**Colle del Sol Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico (Italy), 2024, 12%.** Fruity (apples and apricot) with a refreshing zest to it, this light Verdicchio goes really well with grilled fish and antipasti (Waitrose, £10).

**Fourth Wave, Tread Softly, Pinot Noir (South Australia), 2024, 10.8%.** Tread Softly is a sustainable and lighter in alcohol wine brand, and their Pinot Noir is an excellent value crisp Pinot with bright cherry and strawberry flavours. They plant a native tree for every six bottles sold (Sainsbury's, £9).

*(Wine prices and availability correct at going to press, but are subject to change at short notice.)*

**Next issue:** Wines from around Pouilly-sur-Loire

