



SPECTATOR WINE | JONATHAN RAY



It's back to Tanners this month, whose offer in June was such a great hit with readers. We've another fine selection this time too. There is no theme as such — these are simply the wines I liked the most and they're jolly well-priced too, with only one over a tenner. Discounts are hard to come by but I'm delighted to report that Robert Boutflower, private sales director at Tanners, cracked in the end and gave us up to a quid a bottle off.

We've offered a couple of reds from Sicily over the past few months, but never a white and I'm delighted finally to redress the balance with the easy-going 2014 Preciso Grillo (1). Complex and intricate it ain't, but light, juicy, refreshing and deliciously undemanding it is, extremely quaffable with a long lemony, melony finish. Sicily's wines are increasingly well-made and attractive and this example is ideal for an Indian summer evening in the garden. £6.25 down from £6.80.

I love Gascony more than anywhere else in France, with the possible exception of Alsace. I love its sunflower fields and its unspoilt villages; I love its crazy style of bull-fighting known as Course Landaise, in which foolhardy youths vault and somersault over charging beasts instead of trying to kill them as they do farther south; I love its grub — duck in all its forms, plus the scrumptious apple croustade — and I love its Armagnac. I also love its table wines and, on tasting the 2014 Tanners Gascony Dry White (2) from the Béraut family of Domaine de Pellehaut, I was whisked right back to an early summer break in the heart of d'Artagnan country. A bracing blend of Colombard, Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc, Gros Manseng and Sauvignon Blanc, it's full of zesty citrus notes and fragrant white flowers and is one of those wines that tastes just as good at home as it does by a French pool *en vacances*. £6.90 down from £7.50.

The 2014 Tanners White Burgundy (3)

is about as fine an own-label wine as you will find anywhere. A Chardonnay of real character, it's produced by Cave de Viré, a highly regarded co-operative near Mâcon, comprising well over 200 growers. The Cave was largely responsible for the setting up of the Viré-Clessé AOC some 20 years ago, and it has long been favoured by Tanners. With clean, fresh, lively fruit and a soft, supple, buttery finish, this is textbook Mâconnais Chardonnay. £9.90 down from £10.90.

The 2011 Bodegas Piqueras 'Marius' Reserva (4) goes some way to prove — I hope — that there is more to Spanish wine than just Rioja. Almansa, in south-east

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Spain, is a flat, arid region about 60 miles inland from Alicante. Here the 100-year-old, family-owned Bodegas Piqueras makes wines of laudable quality, as shown by this hugely enjoyable Tempranillo/Garnacha Tintorera/Monastrell blend. Rich, ripe, spicy fruit is tempered and softened by 18 months in American oak, leaving us with a fully mature, mouth-filling red of quite some style. £7.65 down from £8.50.

The 2014 Château Sainte Eulalie, Prestige d'Eulalie (5) is a full-on blend of Syrah, Grenache and Carignan from the heart of Minervois in southern France. Run by Laurent and Isabelle Coustal, Sainte Eulalie lies just outside the village of La Livinière and has gained quite a following of late. It's easy to see why. This is lovely stuff, full of herbs, spice, liquorice and warming dark fruit. £8.25 down from £8.95.

I often feel let down by the wines of Beaujolais. They promise much but all too often fail to deliver — all grind no pepper, all gong no dinner: hence the scarcity of examples in recent offers. The 2014 Saint-Amour, Domaine des Pierres, Jean-François Trichard (6), however, is spot on, as seductive on the palate as it is on the nose, an old vine Cru Beaujolais of real finesse: fresh, juicy and very, very moreish. £11.95 down from £12.95.

There's a sample case with two bottles of each wine and delivery, as ever, is free.

Join Jonathan Ray at the Spectator Wine School. It's your last chance to book. See www.spectator.co.uk/wineschool