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# Champagne taste on a lemonade budget How to drink like a king without breaking the bank

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Here at *Castle Rot* we're lucky enough to drink many of the world's preeminent wines whilst vaguely attempting to pass it off as work, but for most, spending the equivalent of a royal divorce settlement on one special bottle is a luxury we have neither the means nor inclination to entertain. In truth, just because a wine is expensive doesn't mean it is necessarily any better, or more profound, than one that costs a fraction of the price; Hugh Johnson's insightful definition of 'fine wine' being one "worth talking about" is one with which *Noble Rot* wholeheartedly agrees. Sure, an enormously expensive Montrachet might make your taste buds dance the can-can whilst your mind attains borderline nirvana, but for every rare bottle that meets lofty expectations a multitude of others fall short.

Producing a "wine worth talking about" takes a huge investment of time and resources on the part of a winemaker, which must be especially worrying for them given so many of us refuse to recognise the difference between value and price. Nowadays every TV food show and celebrity chef worth their (Maldon) salt takes great pride in telling us to buy the best ingredients we can possibly afford, but when it comes to wine matches they're back in the arse end of a supermarket implying that spending anything over a fiver on a bottle would be a Louis XVI level indulgence. But here's the rub: whilst the raised

costs associated with ethically raising free range chickens are generally understood, producing characterful wines that express a sense of 'somewhereness' has its own hidden factors that make paying a small premium essential too.

So then, we hear you ask, what can *Noble Rot* recommend as a "wine worth talking about" – that can be profound, complex or just stupefyingly delicious, without costing King Arthur his fortune? Admittedly, our sweet spot isn't 'cheap' (you'll find nothing here for less than £13, rising up to early £30s at the top end), but if you're after engaging, world class wines at relatively affordable prices, you've come to the right place. Gathering together bottles from our favourite domaines for a tasting at the royal court of *Rot*, read on for how to drink like a king without breaking the bank...

● *All wines reviewed by The Rotters (Dan Keeling & Mark Andrew). Prices are approximate (wines can be found at [www.winesearcher.com](http://www.winesearcher.com))*

**"What can *Noble Rot* recommend as a "wine worth talking about" – that can be profound, complex or just stupefyingly delicious, without costing King Arthur his fortune?"**

**Riesling**  
A hundred years ago German Riesling was the most expensive wine on the planet; nowadays it represents some of the best quality to price ratios around

**Bischel Riesling Trocken 2013**  
Rheinhessen, Germany  
The Winery  
£14

Crackling with electric acidity, this rockets off the palate with narcotic intensity. A taut, bone dry riesling with piquant grapefruit and stone; unbeatable value.

★★★★★

**Gut Hermannsberg Niederhauser HB Riesling Trocken 2013**  
Nahe, Germany  
The Winery  
£22

Gorgeous entry-level bottling from a renowned old Prussian winery built by convict labour in 1902, enjoying a renaissance under new ownership. Attractive gunflint reductive nose leads to preserved lemon and greengage on a broad and textured palate.

★★★★★

**JJ Prum Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spatlese 2012**  
Mosel, Germany  
Corney & Barrow  
£24

Prum's rieslings are an inverted natural wine snob's worst nightmare; a typically large dose of sulphur overwhelming this young Spatlese's detail. But as the sulphur dissipates a glorious wine emerges, it's ripe concentration so perfectly balanced by high acid levels that on first taste it doesn't obviously seem sweet.

★★★★★



**Albert Boxler Riesling 2012**  
Alsace, France  
Armit Wines  
£23

A rich, honeyed Alsatian counterpoint to the fine boned German examples here, and a solid introduction to Albert Boxler, one of the region's finest addresses.

★★★

**Tatomer 'Kick-On Ranch' Riesling 2012**  
Santa Barbara County, USA  
Roberson Wine  
£28

Brian Eno picked 'Kick-On Ranch' as his favourite wine from our tasting in *Noble Rot* 7, likening its bouquet to cinnamon bark and Plasticine clay. Joining those, for us, are petrol, grapefruit and limes; the vinous equivalent of a bracing Caipirinha.

★★★★★

Left to right: Bischel, Hermannsberg, Prum, Boxler, Tatomer.

## Burgundy & beyond

If you know where to look, there's more to Burgundy than mystical Grand Crus and unobtainable *en primeur* allocations...



**Clockwise from top left:** Domaine Piuze, Houillon-Overnoy, Lafon, Villaine, Pataille, Naudin-Ferrand, Barraud.

**Patrick Piuze Chablis Terroir de Fye 2013**  
Chablis, France  
Handford/ Carte Blanche  
£19

Proper Chablis made by one of the best of the town's new generation. Oyster shell and salty sea aromas, chalky texture and real presence in the glass. Piuze's wines are a steal for their quality.

★★★★

**Domaine Daniel Barraud St Veran Les Pommards 2012**  
Mâconnais, France  
Lea & Sandeman  
£21

Daniel Barraud's superb Chardonnays are snapped up by value conscious Burgundy fans looking for a rich, broad-shouldered style. Oily textured and complex with a touch of Botrytis (aka 'Noble Rot') on the finish; easy, delicious and accessible.

★★★★

**Houillon-Overnoy Chardonnay 2011**  
Arbois, France  
Noble Fine Wine & Liquor  
£28

Pierre Overnoy and Emmanuel Houillon are the Yoda and Obi Wan Kenobi of the Jura (an hour's drive from Burgundy, near the border with Switzerland), making compelling red and white cuvées from Ploussard and Chardonnay. Unfortunately huge demand for these cult wines far outstrips their limited supply, and they're even harder to find in the USA where bottles change hands for £100 plus. Laden with stones, rocks and earth, this Chardonnay has beautifully refreshing acidity that tingles your tastebuds with a unique Jura tang.

★★★★★

**Les Heritiers du Comtes Lafon Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine 2013,**  
Mâconnais, France  
Berry Brothers & Rudd  
£23

Dominique Lafon makes some of Burgundy's most compelling Chardonnays at his Meursault winery, and was among the first wave of Côte D'Or *vignerons* to see the potential in expanding his production into the Côte Mâconnais vineyards to the south. This Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine gives a glimpse of Lafon's accomplished style at a fraction of the Meursault price, a brilliantly delineated wine with a 'sucking stones' minerality.

★★★★★

**Domaine Naudin-Ferrand 'Orchis' 2012**  
Hautes-Côtes de Beaune, France  
Berry Brothers & Rudd  
£29

When Rot's US contributor Keith Levenberg enthused about Naudin-Ferrand wines back in Noble Rot 6, we opened a bottle to see what the fuss was about. "I took the proprietor's recommendation on a number of wines I'd never heard of before. Every single one was stunning. They included a Hautes-Côte-de-Nuits – a freaking Hautes-Côte-de-Nuits! – that drank like a Grand Cru." Likewise, this Hautes-Côtes de Beaune 'Orchis' has the weight, intensity and depth of a red Burgundy much further up the cru hierarchy. We adore these exquisitely perfumed wines; thanks Keith!

★★★★★

**Domaine A. & P. de Villaine Bouzeron 2012**  
Côte Chalonnaise, France  
Justerini & Brooks  
£18

Grown by Aubert de Villaine (co-owner of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti AKA the world's best wine estate), this biodynamic Aligoté may be from humble Bouzeron AOC, but, like its creator, exudes true Burgundian class. Pure, crisp and refreshing, with hints of green apple and fresh herbs. ★★★★★

**Sylvain Pataille Marsannay 'La Combe' 2012**  
Burgundy, France  
The Wine Society  
£23

Sylvain Pataille made his name as a consultant oenologist advising stars like Chambolle-Musigny's Christophe Roumier. Nowadays he's gained even greater acclaim for his portfolio of age-worthy single vineyard Pinot Noirs, full of pure black cherries and ripe supple tannins, like this highly satisfying 'La Combe'.

★★★★

## The Iberian Peninsula

From refreshing Albariños to complex white Rioja, there's never been a better time to enjoy Spanish and Portuguese wine



**Quinta de Saes Estagio Prolongado 2012**  
DAO, Portugal  
Indigo Wines  
£17

Alvaro Castro aims to make elegant, highly drinkable reds rather than the over-wrought alcohol bombs that some of his compatriots produce. Vibrant and fresh, with good structure and a savoury edge. ★★★

**Forjas del Salnes Leirana Finca Genoveva 2013**  
Rias Baixas, Spain  
Carte Blanche  
£22

This is intense. Made by winemaker Rodrigo Méndez using indigenous yeast and old oak foundres, Leirana is one of the most expensive Albariños on the market, but worth every penny. A very refined, almost Burgundian nose, bracing acidity and a long gliding finish; the liquid equivalent of a Hitchcock thriller. ★★★

**Peter Sisseck PSI 2010**  
Ribera Del Douro, Spain  
Corney & Barrow  
£23

Modern style of Tempranillo from revered Danish winemaker, Peter Sisseck (also the creator of the hugely expensive Pingus wines). Dense, dark and broody; blackcurrant fruit, rich texture, chewy tannins. ★★★

**Daniel Jimenez-Landi Las Uvas de la Ira 2013**  
Castilla y Leon, Spain  
Indigo Wines  
£21

A star on Spain's natural wine scene, this is an excellent example of Daniel Gomez Jimenez-Landi's light-handed, refreshing style; a delicious charcoal inflected Garnacha from high altitude vineyards in El Real de San Vicente. ★★★

**Lopez de Heredia Vina Gravonia 2004**  
Rioja, Spain  
Handford  
£19

Fancy a wine from a world famous region, made by an A-list producer in the vintage of the decade, but under £20? Look no further. This dry, full bodied, oxidative, highly complex white (think wax, nuts, vanilla, oak, quince and battery acid (!)) is one of the world's best value wines. If you haven't drunk Lopez de Heredia before, you owe it to yourself to do so at the earliest convenience; because you're worth it. ★★★★★

**Palacio de Fefiñanes Albariño 2014**  
Rias Baixas, Spain  
Waitrose  
£16

A crisp, moreish white of superbly delineated dimension; vivid peach, flowers and citrus contrast with the lip smacking tang of salty sea air. Don't wait too long to drink Albariño as it soon loses vitality, but a chilled bottle of Palacio de Fefiñanes on a hot summer's day is bliss. ★★★★★

**Suertes del Marqués, Trenzado 2013**  
Valle de la Orotava, Tenerife  
Indigo Wines  
£16

What comes to mind when someone mentions Tenerife? Package holidays, volcanic rock and Sex On The Beach? Well, after you drink this sensational, dry blend of Listan Blanco and other local grapes we'll wager you'll soon be adding the brilliant Suertes del Marqués to the list. A gunpowder, almost Coche Dury-esque nose jumps out of the glass with intense minerality continuing on a satisfyingly textured palate. Playa de las Américas here we come! ★★★★★

## Loire Valley

Still undervalued compared to France's most celebrated wine regions, The Loire Valley is a hot bed of winemaking talent

**Guiberteau Saumur Blanc 2013**  
Loire Valley, France  
H2Vin  
£16

Respected exporter Becky Wasserman hit the nail on the head when she said, "Romain Guiberteau makes dry Chenins of punk rock violence yet of Bach-like logic and profoundness. He is creating quite a stir." Laser focused acidity and an almost saline edge may be challenging for some, but the purity of fruit and exceptional delineation of flavours makes this our top pick from one of France's most exciting winemakers. A cult domaine in the making. ★★★★★

**Clau de Nell Cabernet Franc 2012**  
Loire Valley, France  
Armit Wines  
£21

Co-owner Anne Claude Leflaive sadly passed earlier this year, but her legacy lives on at Clau de Nell, the Anjou estate she purchased in 2008. Like her family's domaine in Puligny-Montrachet, all production is 100% biodynamic, here producing an earthy, elegant Cabernet Franc with black and red fruits and a hint of tobacco. ★★★

**Agnès & René Mosse Arena Savennières 2013**  
Loire Valley, France  
Les Caves de Pyrène  
£27

A dry Chenin Blanc with baked red apples and subtle oxidative notes on the palate; like liquid Tarte Tatin! Became open and expressive with an hour in a decanter. ★★★

Clockwise from top left: Quinta de Saes, Suertes del Marques, Finca Genoveva, PSI, Jimenez-Landi, Gravonia, Palacio de Fefiñanes.

## Rhône Valley

Crozes-Hermitage used to be the Northern Rhône's serial underachiever, but thanks to improvements it is now home to several 'go to' producers

**Domaine Gilles Robin, Crozes-Hermitage Cuvée Albéric Bouvet 2011 Rhône, France**  
**Lea & Sandeman**  
**£20**

Attractive, rounded Syrah with deep mulberry jam and floral notes; supple textured and well balanced. ★★☆☆

**Dard & Ribo Crozes-Hermitage 2013 Rhône, France**  
**Les Caves de Pyrène**  
**£25**

This is gorgeously perfumed; pure black fruits, freshly cracked black pepper, smoke and the light, lifted aroma of violets. Amazing quality. ★★★★★

**Domaine des Lises Crozes-Hermitage 2013 Rhône, France**  
**H2Vin**  
**£22**

Owned by Maxim Graillet (son of guru Alain Graillet) this is everything you could wish for in a textbook young Syrah; sweet blackcurrants, flowers and pepper, with structure and ripe powdery tannins. ★★☆☆

**Domaine Jamet Côtes du Rhône Blend of 2009 and 2010 Rhône, France**  
**Blast Vintners**  
**£24**

Jamet produce *Noble Rot's* favourite Côte-Rôtie, as well as a gorgeous Côtes du Rhône made from vineyards just outside the AOP.

Displaying obvious stylistic links to their elegant flagship, this rare blend of the generous 2009 vintage and more backward 2010 is vivid, fresh and brambly. Would even reward more time in the cellar. ★★☆☆

● *Special mention must go to Domaine Romaneaux-Destezet who make amazing value wines, which we buy whenever we find them!*



**Greece**  
A native of Santorini in Greece, Assyrtiko makes one of the Mediterranean's archetypal white wines

**Domaine Sigalas Assyrtiko 2014 Santorini, Greece**  
**Berry Brothers & Rudd**  
**£17**

Zesty, textured and refreshing with a sour, salty tang, Assyrtiko retains excellent levels of acidity even in the scorching Greek climate. With a level of complexity and concentration befitting coming from 60 year old vines, Domaine Sigalas makes brilliant un-oaked examples that we adore. ★★☆☆

**Italy**  
With over 350 indigenous grape varieties, Italian wine is as diverse as it is fascinating

**Archineri Etna Bianco 2012 Sicily, Italy**  
**Armit Wines**  
**£17**

It might be the power of suggestion, but you can almost taste the volcanic rock in this delicately poised Etna white. From 100 to 120 years old pre-phylloxera Carricante vines, this is deep, complex and thoroughly thought provoking. Outstanding. ★★☆☆

**Ar Pe Pe Rosso di Valtellina 2010 Lombardy, Italy**  
**Tutto Wine/ Noble Fine Wine & Liquor**  
**£25**

This is a delicate Alpine Nebbiolo from cult producer Ar Pe Pe, based in Valtellina near Italy's border with Switzerland. Offers up a fresh, beguiling perfume of black cherries, roses and christmas cake. ★★☆☆

**Occhipinti SP58 Rosso 2013 Sicily, Italy**  
**Handford Wine**  
**£18**

An aromatic blend of Frappatto and Nero d'Avola, SP58's offers vivid layers of succulent ripe black and red fruit around a dark graphite core. Juicy, fresh and stylish in a top Cru Beaujolais kind of way. ★★☆☆

**Giacomo Fenocchio Barolo 2011 Piedmont, Italy**  
**Armit Wines**  
**£25**

A proper Barolo for £25? Yes please. Lovely nose of damsons, blackberries and dried rose petals – classic Nebbiolo in other words. On the palate there's superb structure; good acidity, robust but silky tannins, and savoury complexity on a long finish. ★★☆☆

Left to right: Gilles Robin, Dard & Ribo, Domaine des Lises.



Left to Right: Preisinger, Ganevat, Métras, Sunier, Foillard, Nittnaus.



## Blaufrankisch & Beaujolais

Fresh and thirst quenching with a genuine affinity for food, we've long celebrated the similarities between Austrian Blaufrankisch and Cru Beaujolais

**Claus Preisinger Red Blend Heideboden 2012**  
Neusiedlersee, Austria  
Newcomer Wines  
£20

A supple blend of Merlot, Zweigelt and Blaufrankisch from an up and coming young producer with vineyards next to Lake Neusiedl. ★★★

**Domaine Julien Sunier Fleurie 2013**  
Beaujolais, France  
Roberson Wine  
£22

Black and red berries leap out from the glass with an expressive floral top note of violets. Succulent, refined and silky on the palate, this is a perfect summer wine. ★★★

**Nittnaus Blaufrankisch Kalk und Schiefer 2012**  
Burgenland, Austria  
Lea & Sandeman  
£16

Nittnaus make some great Blaufrankisch, their top value *Kalk und Schiefer* (limestone and slate) bottling pitched full of bitter black cherries and stoney freshness. ★★★

**Yvon Métras, Moulin-à-Vent 2010**  
Beaujolais, France  
Theatre Of Wine  
£25

Light crimson in the glass with a beautifully natural nose of raspberries, pomegranates and old oak. This is full bodied but feels weightless at the same time – much like a serious red Burgundy. Can't think of many wines we'd rather spend £25 on, this is as good as Beaujolais gets. ★★★★★

**Domaine Jean Foillard Côte du Py Morgon 2013**  
Beaujolais, France  
Les Caves de Pyrène  
£23

A subtle whiff of meat and forest floor provides balance to ripe juicy fruit. A pure and expressive wine with the structure and complexity to promise good development over the next five years. ★★★

**Domaine Ganevat Madelon Rouge 2013**  
Beaujolais/ Jura blend  
Les Caves de Pyrène  
£25

Fan-Fan Ganevat is one of the Jura's most respected vigneron, and this bonkers blend of Gamay from Beaujolais and an obscure local grape called Enfariné is one of his most left field offerings. Smells like the sweaty pong of a school's sports department lost property bin, but layers of delicious pure dark fruit and a lovely long finish redeem this intriguing wine. One for the adventurous. ★★★

## The New New World

A talented new generation is challenging tired pre-conceptions and producing superbly balanced wines

**Jamsheed Roussanne 2013**  
Beechworth, Australia  
Berry Brothers & Rudd  
£24

Gary Mills makes elegant, restrained Australian Syrah, which should be no surprise considering he trained under legendary Ridge winemaker, Paul Draper (check out our interview with Paul on p33). This Roussanne comes from the same vineyard three hours north of Melbourne that cult Oz estate Gioconda used to pick from, but is less than half the price of their *Aoelia* cuvée; nice value for lovers of opulent, buttery Rhône style whites. ★★★

Left to right: Savage, Broc Cellars, Sadie, Ruggabellus, Jamsheed.



**Duncan Savage  
White Blend 2013  
Western Cape,  
South Africa  
Berry Brothers & Rudd  
£30**

We love this Bordeaux inspired white blend of Sauvignon Blanc (56%) and Semillon (44%). Rich and weighty with subtle notes of pineapple, passionfruit and beeswax, balanced with a refreshing spine of acidity. ★★★★★

**Broc Cellars Vine Starr  
Zinfandel 2013  
Berkeley, USA  
Roberson Wine  
£28**

Perfect when chilled, this atypical Zinfandel tastes like a vibrant health tonic with a thirst quenching drinkability that pulls you back, sip after sip. ★★★★★

**Sadie Family Wines  
Soldaat Old Vines  
Series 2013  
Olifants River Valley,  
South Africa  
Handford Wine  
£28**

Eben Sadie makes some of South Africa's most spellbinding wines, and for his *Old Vines Series* rescued many derelict vineyards full of vines up to 100 years in age. The resultant cuvées are unique and compelling, this lightly coloured 100% Grenache exhibiting an intense perfume of herbs, raspberries and hazelnuts. ★★★★★

**Ruggabellus Fluvus 2013,  
Barossa Valley,  
Australia  
Indigo Wines  
£25**

Delicious powdery tannins, good structure and noticeably improving over successive days tasting, suggesting it could benefit from bottle age. An elegant blend of Grenache, Mataro, Cinsault and Syrah that is quite unlike anything that *Noble Rot* has drunk from the Barossa Valley before. Highly recommended. ★★★★★



## Southern France

Warm, gutsy and seasoned with garrigue herbs; we're suckers for these Southern reds

Left to right: La Soula, Coutelou, Gramenon.

**Le Soula Rouge 2010  
Roussillon, France  
Berry Brothers & Rudd  
£25**

A blend of Carignan, Syrah and Grenache grown on poor granitic soil high in the foothills of the Pyrénées; full of herbs, red fruit and game, with seamlessly integrated tannins. Le Soula produce brilliant terroir expressive wines year after year. ★★★★★

**Mas Coutelou  
Classe 2013  
Languedoc, France  
Roberson Wine  
£17**

From his winery in the village of Puimisson close to Béziers, Jeff Coutelou makes seriously drinkable natural wines that are often as good young as with a few years evolution. A blend of Grenache, Syrah and Carignan, *Classe* offers vibrant dark fruit, an uplifting floral note and a backdrop of dried herbs; zingy and satisfying. ★★★★★

**Domaine Gramenon  
La Sagesse 2013,  
Côtes-du-Rhone, France  
Caves de Pyrène  
£22**

Cult winemakers Domaine Gramenon make Côte-du-Rhône using minimal added sulphur and authentic old school techniques. *La Sagesse* is rounded in the mouth with a spicy warm glow, soft tannins and a beautiful purity of fruit. From 50 year old Grenache vines at low yields. ★★★★★

## Bordeaux

Bordeaux's corporate affectations and uncompromising pricing have seen it fall out of favour with many drinkers over recent years, but that doesn't change the fact that the Bordelais make a seriously good bottle of wine



**Château Les Cruzelles  
2012  
Lalande de Pomerol,  
Bordeaux  
Farr Vintners  
£20**

**Château La Chenade  
2012  
Lalande de Pomerol,  
Bordeaux  
Farr Vintners  
£10**

Pomerol doesn't get much better than Chateau L'Eglise Clinet, but at £300 a bottle for the 2009 these wines don't come cheap. However, L'Eglise Clinet's proprietor Denis Durantou makes other superb wines nearby, which allow a glimpse of the gorgeous plummy fruit and silken textures of his top cuvee at a fraction of the price. A stand out value, Les Cruzelles has lovely dark brambly fruit, good weight and balance, whilst La Chenade comes from younger vines from the same vineyard. ★★★★★

Left to right: Chenade, Cruzelles, Falfas.

**Château Falfas 2010,**  
**Côtes-de-Bourg, France**  
**Roberson Wine**  
**£18**

Bordeaux's first biodynamic estate, this Côtes-de-Bourg smells like cassis with a classic backdrop of pencil shavings. There's a dark graphite-like minerality on the palate, but lots of succulent plum and blackcurrant fruit that placates any suggestion of austerity. ★★☆☆

**Château le Puy**  
**Emilien 2011**  
**Francs Côtes-de-**  
**Bordeaux, France**  
**Dynamic Vines**  
**£30**

Another biodynamic Bordeaux estate, the 400 year old Château le Puy overlooks the Dordogne from the same 'Plateau of Wonders' as Pomerol and Saint Emillion sit. A sulphur-free Merlot dominated blend; silky tannins and pure supple fruit make this gorgeous, generous wine perfect for early drinking. ★★☆☆

**"Champagne!**  
**Champagne!**  
**The king**  
**demands**  
**more**  
**Champagne!"**

**"But sire,**  
**Champagne**  
**doesn't have**  
**the monopoly**  
**on stylish**  
**bubbles!"**

**"Off with his**  
**head!"**



**Francois Chidaine,**  
**Montlouis Brut**  
**Nature NV**  
**Loire Valley, France**  
**H2Vin**  
**£19**

A sparkling Chenin Blanc from the Loire made by the traditional method of secondary fermentation in bottle, and one that would give many more expensive Champagnes a run for their money. A fresh, linear style with zero dosage and autolytic (yeast, biscuity) notes. ★★☆☆

**Huet Vouvray**  
**Pétillant 2009**  
**Loire Valley, France**  
**Armit Wines'**  
**£22**

A rich, honeyed sparkling Vouvray from Huet, possibly the most undervalued wine estate in France. Deep and complex with notes of pears, apples, herbs, biscuits and asparagus; blind you could be forgiven for picking this out as satisfying vintage Champagne. ★★☆☆

**Wiston Estate Brut NV**  
**South Downs, England**  
**Corney & Barrow**  
**£25**

Crisp, pale lemon with a fine persistent bead, bright citrus, hazelnuts, delicate with good length. ★★☆☆

**Hambledon Classic**  
**Cuvee NV**  
**Hampshire, England**  
**Berry Brothers & Rudd**  
**£30**

One of the best English sparkling wines we've had, this has exceptional weight and richness balanced by the searing acidity you'd expect from such northerly vineyards. Complex array of aromas, from natural yoghurt to biscuit, hazelnut and citrus; on a level with serious grower's Champagne. ★★☆☆

**Aurélien Suenen Blanc**  
**de Blanc NV**  
**Champagne**  
**Vinetrail, CVS**  
**£31**

We were blown away when a friend returned from Champagne with a bottle of Aurélien Suenen's *Blanc de Blanc*. With a fine, persistent bead and delicate mousse, this is taut, elegant and searingly mineral, yet generous and giving. Stunning wine. ★★☆☆

**Marguet Père et Fils,**  
**Grand Cru Rosé NV**  
**Champagne**  
**The Wine Society**  
**£25**

Another exciting up and coming producer, this time based in the Grand Cru village of Ambonnay. Considering most rosé champagne sells for a premium compared to regular cuvées, Marguet Père et Fils' superb basic bottling is exceptional value; crisp red fruits, refreshing and long (62% Chardonnay and 38% Pinot Noir). ★★☆☆

Left to right: Huet,  
Wiston, Marguet,  
Suenen, Chidaine.