



## A mature choice

**Katherine Donnelly**



**T**wo things guaranteed to enhance wine pleasure are opening a bottle at its peak and getting a good vintage. Wines mature differently and some are at their pinnacle in the year after they are produced. Enjoyed for their freshness, they are the very thing to have to hand when temperatures rise.

When that year also happens to have been a good vintage, it's a win-win, although in New World countries such as Australia and Chile, which produce a wealth of choice in early drinkers, more reliable weather patterns mean that vintage plays a lesser role.

Forget the dreary Irish summer — 2009 was generally a good vintage for wine in Europe, and the Irish summer 2010-style offers the perfect weather for drinking it.

So, as the holiday season gets into full swing, draw up a checklist and top it with a perky rosé, or another must-be-consumed-

within-the-year wine, such as a spritzy Vinho Verde from Portugal.

Other early drinkers from Europe include simpler Loire Sauvignon Blancs, such as from the Touraine or Quincy, Spain's Verdejo, and, dare I say, Pinot Grigio.

Germany and Austria, famous for their crisp, aromatic whites, were very happy with their 2009s.

Among the best of the summer reds is Beaujolais. Forget the all-too-early raspy stuff that is sold weeks after the vintage — now is the time to enjoy its acclaimed 2009s.


Other light to medium-bodied reds include Pinot Noir, Merlot, Grenache (Garnacha in Spain), Carmènere, Italy's Valpolicella, or a Loire Cabernet Franc.

While sipping the youthful pleasures of some 2009s, it may be worth pondering the longer-term gratification of others, such as an age-worthy Bordeaux red from an exciting vintage.

Names such as Château Margaux and Château Lafite have already reached €1,000 per bottle.

Anyone prepared to get into en primeur, futures-style buying can put money down now and pay duty, tax and transport/insurance on delivery in mid-2012.

Dublin merchants Mitchell & Son have wines from an upfront price of €60 for a case of 12 (Chateau d'Argens Bordeaux Superieur), which should work out at less than a tenner a bottle on the table.

Wicklow Wine Co has a selection from small chateaux from €75 a case. As an example, the full price to be paid for the Chateau Labegorce Margaux works out at €23.55 per bottle. As a comparison, the 2003 vintage is on sale at €43.50. 

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### \* TAKE TWO WINES

● **Laurenz V Singing Grüner Veltliner Kamptal 2009** — Austria's Grüner Veltliner can age, but this one is drinking perfectly now. When I asked the winemaker why it was called Singing, he said it was because his wife said it tickles the tongue. Rich, spicy and food-friendly, if smoked salmon is on the menu then this is the wine for it. 12pc alc. €15.99 Available from Donnybrook Fair; The Laurels, Perystown; Sweeneys, Harts Corner; Langtons, Kilkenny; Woodberrys, Galway; Callans, Dundalk; O'Sullivan's, Blarney.

● **Michèle et Francois Descombes Vieilles**



#### STAR WINE

**Domaine de Nizas Coteaux du Languedoc Rosé 2009**

— Rosé is a summer must. Some are sweeter than others and I prefer mine dry. This typical southern French blend of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre is lively, dry and crisp, with lifted floral and strawberry notes, and it brings a touch of the Med to your home. 13pc alc. €11.45. Available from O'Biens.



#### Vignes Beaujolais Villages 2009

— old vines from a tiny vineyard, delivering a silky Beaujolais. Full of fleshy cherry and plums, with an earthy undertow and a lively bite, it makes a great summer drinker, on its own or with food. 13pc alc. €9.95 Available from vineyardsdirect.ie (minimum order one case which may be mixed).

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