

Find a diversion from the well-trodden wine route

Drink



Will Lyons

What's a good wine?" is probably the question people ask me most frequently. When I started out in the business I worked for plenty of merchants and always loved the interaction with the seriously knowledgeable wine-loving buyers who came

through the door and with those who knew absolutely nothing but wanted something interesting to take home that day.

Rather than asking what constitutes a good bottle, perhaps the more interesting question is: "What have you tasted recently that really excites you?" When I wander into a wine store, that's the question I always put to whoever is behind the counter — and more often than not it will elicit an enthusiastic response and have them scampering off to find a product that's a little different. February is the month when we can fall off the wagon after our

"dryish" January and over the past few weeks I have been trying to find wines that inspire, punch above their price tag and offer a welcome detour from what you may have tasted before.

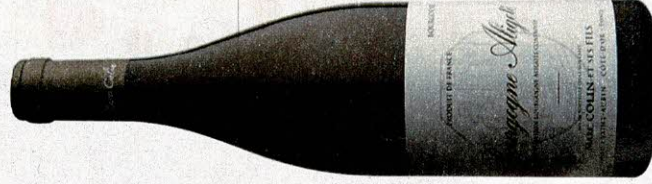
You don't necessarily have to look very far to get beyond the monochrome styles that can at times appear overwhelming. An intriguing discovery from a classic region outside the *appellation contrôlée* system that's labelled a mere *vin de France* can be as rewarding as a wine that tries to break the mould ■
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VENDANGE NOCTURNE MELON BLANC THE DAILY DRINKER, £11

France

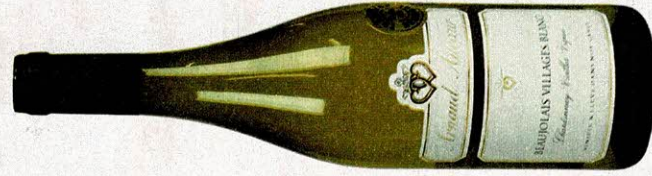
This is muscadet, but you wouldn't know it from the label. There is no vintage, only the grape variety and the word "nocturne", as the fruit was picked at night. It has tangy notes of green apple — and at 11 per cent alcohol it's a lighter choice for midwinter.



2018 MARC COLIN BOURGOGNE ALIGOTÉ BERRY BROS & RUDD, £20

France

Burgundy's white wines are dominated by chardonnay, but aligoté can be an interesting insider's alternative. Derived from aged vines in Puligny, St Aubin and Chassagne, this is well structured and satisfying, with hints of thyme and citrus.



2018 ARNAUD AUGOEUR BEAUJOLAIS VILLAGES BLANC YAPP BROTHERS, £13.50

France

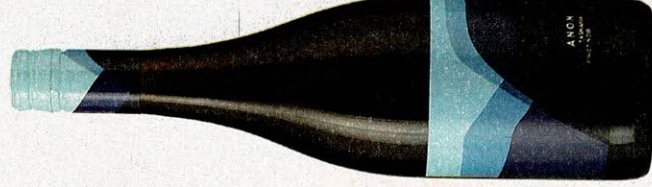
There is so much more to beaujolais than nouveau. Why not seek out white? Aged without oak, this 100 per cent chardonnay from Morgon has subtle fruit flavour and a clean mineral finish. Lovely with seafood.



2018 CHÂTEAU CAPENDU LA COMELLE CORBIÈRES WAITROSE, £7

France

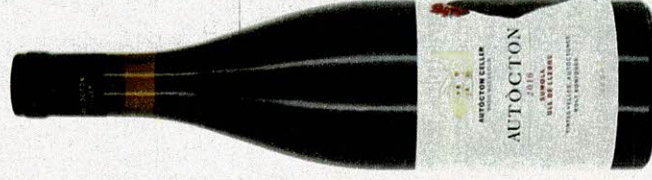
Corbières should be on everyone's radar for attractively priced, easy-drinking reds. A generous, warming blend of carignan and grenache, this has plenty of dark fruit and a touch of spice. Perfect for a simple midweek supper.



2016 ANON TASMANIA PINOT NOIR MAJESTIC, £15

Australia

Tasmania has been on my "one to watch" list for a few years now. Not only can it produce top-class sparkling wine, it's also delivering some singular pinot noir. Here's a case in point — it's delicate and elegant, packed with lip-smacking plum and raspberry.



2016 VINYES VELLES AUTOCTON CELLER LEA & SANDEMAN, £16

Spain

Native to Catalonia, sumoll is an intriguing red grape variety you may not have sampled that makes a rustic, vivacious alternative to pinot noir. This example has a light texture and buzzes with juicy red fruit.