

Napoleon Red Case



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This month, the Napoleon Red Case is characterised by classic wines from great vintages. 2009 is widely regarded as the most successful Bordeaux vintage of recent years and the Deyrem Valentin shows all the glossy richness and poise of 2009. The early harvest of 2011 was ideally suited to the Barbera grape and Mario Fontana's wine is therefore poised and pure with suave, silky fruit. For something a little more unusual, I hope you'll enjoy the crunchy, cherry-fruited Trousseau; it makes an interesting alternative to Beaujolais or Pinot Noir.

2009 CH. DEYREM VALENTIN, MARGAUX



There has been a vineyard at Deyrem Valentin since 1730, and it is a superb site for growing vines. Owned by Jean Sorge (ably assisted by his two daughters), this is just the sort of château that we are always hoping to come across. A small, focused, family operation, which in a vintage such as 2009, eclipses far more exalted names.

I ran out of adjectives when I first tasted this. Dark and glossy in the glass, the nose is rich with violets and cassis, and a decadent dash of oak. The palate is silky in the way that good Margaux should be, the overall mouth feel balanced and harmonious. The unusually high Merlot content lends a sense of opulence.

Food matches	Lamb shanks; toulouse sausage with lentils
Price	£28.50 per bottle
How to serve	Cool room temperature, no need to decant
Region	Bordeaux, France
Grape variety	Merlot 50%, Cabernet Sauvignon 48%, Petit Verdot 1%, Carménère 1%
Product code	91575B
Style	Dry, full-bodied red wine
Terroir	Fine gravel and sand over limestone
Buyer	Philip Moulin

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

OTHER LEFT BANK BORDEAUX

2011 BARBERA D'ALBA, CASCINA MARIO FONTANA



Sixth generation Mario Fontana created Azienda Agricola Cascina Fontana, this tiny 4 hectare jewel of a Barolo estate in 1995. Based in the hamlet of Perno they own parcels in three Castiglione Falletto vineyards: Valletti, Villero and Pozzo. Mario tends the vines as sensitively as possible, makes the wine and, when necessary, also delivers it in his blue van.

Vintage 2011, with its hot summer and fresh nights, culminating in an early harvest, was ideal for Piedmont's Barbera grape. The result is perfectly demonstrated by this suave, rich Spanish plum (skin) beauty, vinified from grapes 60% from Mario's old vine site behind Sinio Castello, and 40% from the classy vineyards of Castiglione Falletto.

Food matches	Spaghetti al ragu/bolognese
Price	£18.50 per bottle
How to serve	At 18°C
Region	Piedmont, Italy
Grape variety	Barbera
Product code	96521B
Style	Dry, medium to full-bodied red wine
Terroir	Sandy marl
Buyer	David Berry Green

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

LANGHE NEBBIOLO OR BARBERA D'ASTI

2012 DOMAINE GRAND, TROUSSEAU, COTES DU JURA



Domaine Grand have been developing their 22 hectare production in the beautiful Jura hills, across the valley of the Saône from Burgundy, since 1976. Their range of wines includes a stylish lighter red from the indigenous Trousseau grape, which is the same as Portuguese Bastardo. A perfect wine for early summer drinking.

A pale garnet in colour, yet unexpectedly perfumed on the nose, with spring flowers and light cherry notes, while the palate delivers further red fruit notes along with a zest of orange, allied to a smooth texture and gentle finish.

Food matches	Salmon or trout
Price	£15.00 per bottle
How to serve	At room temperature
Region	Jura, France
Grape variety	Trousseau
Product code	97122B
Style	Dry, medium-bodied red wine
Terroir	Jurassic clay-limestone
Buyer	Jasper Morris MW

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

LIGHT PINOT NOIRS FROM BURGUNDY

2011 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE, PIEDLONG (L'ACCENT), DOMAINE LA ROQUÊTE, BRUNIER



Famed for their outstanding Vieux Télégraphe, the Brunier brothers also own this eponymous parcel of old vine Grenache, located on a central plateau, adorned by large photogenic pudding stones. Matured for a year in large *foudres* Piedlong has forged its own identity, which majors on complex aromatics and purity of texture.

Daniel says poetically that 'you feel the Mistral in this wine' as notes of violets, crushed rocks and the *garrigue* all vent their charms. Flavours of blueberry, licorice, black pepper and lavender underwrite the complexity here and the finish is both pure and long.

Food matches	Pheasant, partridge, jugged hare, Comté
Price	£32.95 per bottle
How to serve	Decant an hour before serving
Region	Rhône, France
Grape variety	Grenache 90%, Mourvèdre 10%
Product code	93270B
Style	Dry, full-bodied red wine
Terroir	Galets ('pudding stones') then sandy top soil and clay beneath.
Buyer	Simon Field MW

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

GIGONDAS OR VAQUEYRAS

2008 CONSTANTIA GLEN FIVE, CONSTANTIA



60 hectares of beautiful rolling countryside overlooking False Bay comprise this wine farm that has been a cattle stud in a previous existence, before the clay soils were turned over to vine growing. The height on the slope means the farm is less overshadowed by the Constantiaberg than many other nearby properties.

Deep ruby in appearance. On the nose blackcurrants, ripe black cherries, a leafy and smoky note with oak toast and spice. The palate is full bodied with ripe and fine tannins, a mass of black fruit supported by well-judged French oak spice and toast.

Food matches	Any robust red meat dish and cows' milk cheeses
Price	£24.75 per bottle
How to serve	At room temperature, an hour after decanting
Region	Cape Valley, South Africa
Grape variety	Cabernet Franc 36%, Cabernet Sauvignon 22%, Petit Verdot 15%, Malbec 14% and Merlot 13%
Product code	86654B
Style	Dry, full-bodied red wine
Terroir	Steeply sloping vineyards close to the Constantia neck
Buyer	Martin Hudson MW

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

LEFT BANK BORDEAUX

2011 DOMAINE LE ROC, CUVÉE, DON QUICHOTTE, FRANTON



Just to the north of Toulouse in the Haut Garonne department, Franton is a celebrated appellation in France, but less known elsewhere. It should be! Here the wildly underrated grape variety, Négrette, flourishes and the region's leading producer, ably led by Jean-Luc Ribes, shows off its not inconsiderable potential.

The wine has a distinctive perfume of cassis, woodsmoke and a hint of musk. The palate captures the essence of Négrette: floral, linear and a little savoury, with attractive hedgerow fruits added courtesy of the Cabernet Franc. The finish is long and refreshing.

Food matches	Duck, pork or <i>tomme de chèvre</i>
Price	£16.95 per bottle
How to serve	Decant 30 minutes before serving at room temperature
Region	South West France
Grape variety	Négrette 60%, Cabernet Franc 40%
Product code	98810B
Style	Dry, medium to full-bodied aromatic red wine
Terroir	<i>Boulbènes</i> (stones of sand and silt) over alluvial clay
Buyer	Simon Field MW

Tasting notes

If you like this, you might like:

CHINON OR SOUTHERN RHÔNE BLENDS