

## Wine Column March 2009

### Cheap and Cheerful

Of the 50 wines or so, I have tasted recently priced below £6.00, many were faulty and undrinkable, that may sound shocking, but it really should not come as too much of a surprise: with duty at more than £1.10 a bottle, VAT at 15%, retailers' mark-up at 30-45%, agents, shipping, bottle, cork and label to be paid for, there is not much left for grapes and wine making.

Think about it: if you want to produce a cheap wine and still make a profit, you have just got to cut corners. The grapes will be on inferior quality, the bottle light weight to reduce transport costs, the cork, if it is natural, short and cheap grade.

If the wine needs to be oaked or flavoured, substitutes will be used (for example, pellets filled with sawdust or wooden chip will be submerged into the unoaked wine to produce the flavour demanded by the buyers. And believe me, there are plenty of other unscrupulous ways to lower prices point even further.

I always remember an Italian producer, who was being squeezed on cost by a buyer from a low price supermarket: "of course you can have wine for that price" he said generously, "but I can not guarantee there will be any grapes in it".

There was one drinkable Bordeaux & Loire wine in the range I tasted, but on the whole, I would suggest you steer clear of the cheap price level of the old world. Buy your low price wines from South Africa, Chile or Argentina, where the production costs are lower and where you will get a lot more grapes to the pound.

### My Suggestions

- 1) – MENDOZA, chenin blanc from Argentina, 2008, £5.75  
Refreshing and zippy, the finish is long and rewarding
- 2) – ECHEVERRIA, Merlot from Chile, 2008, £5.95  
A clean cut, fruit driven wine that will please most palate with or without food
- 3) – ANJOU ROSE, Domaine des Cèdres, from the Loire Valley, 2008, £5.99  
A quaffing wine, good fruits and a simple spring, summer thirst-quencher.

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Forbury's restaurant & Wine Bar

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