

WINE

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AFTER the excesses of the festive period I'm sure many of you will be cutting back on alcohol.

I personally always make sure that I have at least two days a week when I don't consume any alcohol at all - usually Mondays and Tuesdays.

At certain times of year I also like to abstain for longer periods to give my liver a longer rest.

Two weeks is about the longest I've completed in recent years but the thought of a whole month without wine (DryJanuary) would fill me with dread. During a period largely devoid of joy and warmth, the prospect of a fine wine to light up a gloomy Saturday night is a shining beacon of hope

during the grim midweek.

If you are going teetotal most of the week, why not use the pennies you save to invest in your weekend lifesaver? These two bottles of Californian sunshine from one of my favourite producers are just what I'm talking about.

Marimar Albarino Don Miguel Vineyard 2015
(£29.50)

Amazon, Discover Wine Ltd, Vivino)

The Marimar estate is owned by Marimar Torres, the sister of Miguel A. Torres, President of Bodegas Torres. In 1986 she established the Don Miguel vineyard in the Russian River

● **MarimarDon Miguel Pinot Noir 2013**

Valley subsection of Sonoma County. It was a move that paid off handsomely, not least because the area has the perfect cooler climate for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

But she initially planted Albarino, a variety that performs well in rainy Galicia, in another vineyard nearer to the Sonoma coastline.

It seemed a logical move but Albarino proved difficult to ripen there and the vines were eventually grafted onto roots at Don Miguel.

If Albarino gets too ripe it becomes flaccid and loses its poise.

Here, however, that risk is entirely

avoided with a wine that is both gutsy and elegant.

Soft white peach is livened up by zingy green apple and there's more than a hint of fennel that carries across the nose and palate.

Malolactic fermentation gives the palate a rich, creamy texture which is nevertheless underpinned by minerality.

La Masia Pinot Noir Don Miguel Vineyard 2013
(£40 Amazon, Soho Wine Supply Ltd, Hailsham

"This wine shows all the fragrance for which Pinot is justly admired"



Cellars)

In its greatest expressions there's nothing as sensuous and alluring as Pinot Noir.

Problem is finding Pinot that fits that description isn't easy at budget prices.

I would say that Pinot is the most disappointing of grapes at tastings.

For every bottle that hits the mark there are 20 others that are too leafy, too sweet or too dull.

This is one that most definitely hits the mark.

And that isn't surprising.

Pinot is notoriously picky about the vineyards it selects to show its best character and clearly Don Miguel is one of them.

This wine shows all the fragrance for which Pinot is justly admired: floral cherry and earthy spices are united in a nose which carries a savoury edge.

The palate is juicy and sensuous, adding brighter red fruits to the aforementioned cherry.

It's wonderful stuff and one of the very best wines I tasted in 2017.