



Christmas crackers



fruit OF THE vine
 GRAEME PHILLIPS

It's a hard job but someone has to do it. Graeme Phillips gives his expert opinion on the top drops from July to December

WITH Christmas in mind, here's a look back at the wines that have impressed me as the best-value buys over the past six months.

If you're paying up to \$18 a bottle, I reckon you want the wine to rate better than just one bottle OK, at least two bottles good, and hopefully better.

Similarly, wines costing up to \$25 should be worth at least a three-bottle rating to deliver good value; those up to \$40 should rate at least four bottles and anything over that price should be nothing less than five-bottle fabulous if they're to represent value.

Those less than \$10 with a five-bottle rating or under \$25 with a four-bottle rating and so on represent exceptional value.

So I hope this list helps as a value-for-money guide for your festive season and summer drinking.

Two-bottle wines \$18 and under

De Bortoli Sacred Hill 2011 Moscato, \$10

This is a good example of a sweeter

moscato style – very sweet but nicely refreshing when given a good chill and with enough balancing acid to lift and clean up the finish. 8.0 per cent alcohol. www.debortoli.com.au

Angove Nine Vine 2011 Pinot Grigio, \$14

A pleasantly crisp, dry, minerally drop true to the grigio style, with hints of varietal pear and banana on a smoothly textured, lightweight palate, the fruit and alcohol tending to add a suggestion of sweetness at the end. 12.0 pc. www.angove.com.au

Angove 2011 Vineyard Select Sauvignon Blanc, \$18

Intense tropical fruit and herbal aromatics and flavours on a light, straightforward palate with the softness of the finish lifted by a lick of fruit sweetness. 12.5 pc. www.angove.com.au

Yellow Tail 2008 Reserve Shiraz, \$15

Dark purple colour, a big fruit and spice nose with the smoothly textured palate only mid-weight but showing rich, nicely mellow and well-balanced fruitcake, vanilla and toasty oak characters before a shortish finish. 13.5 pc. www.yellowtail.com

Angove Nine Vines 2011 Grenache Shiraz Rose, \$14

Fresh raspberry aromas with hints of spice and similar flavours in the mouth on a light, clean and simple palate finishing fresh and sweetly – but not too sweetly – fruity. 12.0 pc. www.angove.com.au

Three-bottle wines \$25 and under

Valdo Cuvee Di Boj Prosecco Superiore, \$23

A fresh, fine and lively fizz, the aromas more pear than apple like, as light as fairy floss in the mouth with attractive caramelised apple and pastry, tarte-tartin characters and a lovely, light and refreshing finish. 11.5 pc. Italian Pantry.

Wobbly Boot 2011 Sauvignon Blanc, \$24

A vibrant, punchy style, intensely aromatic and flavoured, with grapefruit, tropical fruits and grassy flavours providing a lovely tang and a crisp, sweet-sour edginess to the palate before a long, refreshingly clean finish. 13.0 pc (estimate). www.wobblybootvineyard.com.au

Iron Pot Bay 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon, \$21

Very pale colour and a fairly restrained nose before a fresh, clean,



unoaked palate showing lively citrus, ginger and tropical fruit flavours, the finish refreshingly crisp and lingering. 12.8 pc.
www.ironpotbay.com.au

Tower Estate 2011 Semillon, \$22

A restrained nose followed by a light and surprising – for a young Hunter semillon – full-flavoured and textured palate, with lemon barley sugar flavours cut by mouth-puckering, citrusy acid which needs food and should tone down a bit with time. 11.0 pc. www.towerestate.com

O'Leary Walker

2011 Watervale Riesling, \$18

Fragrant green apple and juicy lime aromas and flavours with touches of spice on a firm, slightly plump, minerally palate, the crisp finish lifted at the end by a popular touch of fruitiness. 12.5 pc.
www.olearywalkerwines.com

Taylor's Jaraman

2011 Riesling, \$25

Lime-leaf aromas with a pineapple-like tang, the flavours more reserved with lime marmalade characters on a nicely balanced and fresh-finishing palate. 12.0 pc.
www.taylorswines.com.au

Native Point 2009 Riesling, \$25

Delicious lime-sherbet nose followed by a delicate, tight and finely structured, fruit-pure palate finishing with bracing lemon-zest acidity and a long, mouthwatering aftertaste. 12.0 pc.
www.nativepoint.com

Tahbilk 2011 Marsanne, \$18

Citrus and herbal aromatics and flavours with background

suggestions of honeyed-pear, the palate light, bright and nicely balanced with a good refreshingly dry finish. Enjoy it now or put it away for a few years and see it dramatically change into a wonderfully rich and complex, honeyed gem. 11.5 pc.
www.tahbilk.com.au

Kalleske Florentine

2011 Chenin Blanc, \$18

Like all of Kalleske wines, this is certified organic/biodynamic. Pale straw colour with a deliciously aromatic nose suggesting apples, honeysuckle and almonds, the lightweight palate more dried fig and herbal with subtle oak providing some body and texture, finishing nicely crisp, dry and long. 12.0 pc.
www.kalleske.com

Chapel Hill 2011 Il Vescovo, \$22

An unusual blend of savagnin, verdelho and roussanne grapes providing an attractive minerally, flinty dryness and rustic earthiness underpinning ripe apricot flavours on a smooth, mid-weight palate with the appealing freshness of the finish dulled a little by a touch of alcoholic warmth. 13.0 pc.
www.chapelhillwine.com.au

Chalmers 2011 Montevecchio Bianco, \$23

An unusual and deliciously fragrant blend of the Italian varieties vermentino, fianno and moscato giallo, with fresh rockmelon and savoury herbal flavours on a soft, long and crisply dry palate. 12.5 pc.
www.montevecchio.com.au

Sharmans 2008 Noble Late

Harvest Riesling, \$20

A polished green-gold colour, the nose redolent of jasmine and orange zest before a full, smoothly textured palate showing richer honey and juicy citrus flavours with the medium-level sweetness cut and balanced by good cleansing acid. Good value. 11.6 pc.
www.sharmanswines.com

Alta 2011 For Elise Pinot Noir

Rose, \$20

Floral raspberry and strawberry aromatics but a much drier palate with just a hint of fruit sweetness, oak spiciness and a soft creamy texture running to a finish that is nicely fresh and dry. 12.5 pc.
www.altavineyards.com.au

Iron Pot Bay 2010 Pinot

Meunier Rose, \$21

Musk and strawberry liqueur on the nose, with the palate showing more bubblegum and cherry-like flavours and good acid providing a light, bright freshness and a long, pleasingly crisp finish. 12.3 pc.
www.ironpotbay.com.au

Bass Strait 2009 Pinot Noir, \$23

Cherry liqueur plus a beetroot-like earthiness, juicy with some attractive weight and depth, nicely balanced with firm tannins drying up the finish. 13.5 pc.
bassfinewine@inet.net.au

Bellariva 2009 Sangiovese

Merlot, \$18

A light, bright ruby colour and similarly light and bright aromas and flavours, the nicely balanced, lightweight palate carrying sweetish fresh cherry and pastille-like notes



offset against more rustic, savoury characters towards the finish, making for a very pleasant slip-down drop. 13.5 pc. www.bellariva.com.au

Zilzie 2009 Merlot, \$16

Good briar and ripe berry aromas and flavours, the sweetness of the fruit offset by savoury, earthy notes adding interest, depth and complexity and making for an enjoyable wine. 13.0 pc. www.zilziewines.com

Tahbilk 2008 Shiraz, \$20

A darker, rich and ripe, full-bodied style with mulberry-like fruit, mocha and background suggestions of mint, the palate nicely rounded, balanced and firmly structured and with a pedigree to age long term. 14.5 pc. www.tahbilk.com.au

Four-bottle wines \$40 and under

Furlan Prosecco Superiore Extra Dry, \$38

A more substantial drop than usual for a Prosecco, with fragrant apple blossom aromas and a Granny Smith fresh crispness on top of baked pastry and honey complexity, beautifully textured, balanced, off dry and long-lasting. 11.5 pc. Coolwine.

Gleneldon 2011 Riesling, \$18

Delicate floral aromas and a full but equally delicate palate that is beginning to broaden, soften and show some development with subtle lime blossom and talc characters around a core of gentle citrusy acid. 12.2 pc. www.gleneldonwines.com.au

Holm Oak 2010 Riesling, \$25

A highly perfumed nose before a intensely flavoured palate with an attractive complexity of lime, loquats, tropical fruits and cinnamon spice flavours backed by a little fruit sweetness, the finish refreshed and crisped by fine balancing acidity. A very interesting and appealing style.

12.5 pc. www.holmoakvineyards.com.au

Derwent Estate 2010 Riesling, \$25

A youthful pale colour with flashes of gold, the fragrant nose and tight, juicy palate showing lime zest and floral notes with beautifully balanced acidity providing lift and a long, refreshing, lip-smacking finish. 12.0 pc. www.derwentestate.com.au

Stefano Lubiana 2010 Riesling, \$25

A similar pale gold colour as its Derwent Estate neighbour, but more intense lime essence on the nose and a fuller, more textured and complex palate with some mineral and herbal savouriness underpinning the fruit and running through to a firm, fresh, clean finish. 12.0 pc. www.slw.com.au

Observatory Hill 2008

Vitner's Reserve Riesling, \$27

Still a pale green-gold colour with some delicious developed characters showing on the nose and in the waxy honeycomb and cumquat marmalade-like flavours of the palate, all nicely intense and beautifully balanced, still with a few years to go. 12.0 pc. www.observatoryhill.com.au

McGuigan The Shortlist

2005 Riesling, \$29

Still a youthful straw gold before its age and development show up on the nose, with honey and lemon/grapefruit marmalade notes carrying through to a finely structured and beautifully developed palate and a long, mineral dry and honeyed citrus finish. 12.0 pc. www.mcguiganwines.com.au

Frogmore Creek

Evermore 2009 Riesling, \$38

Unconventional winemaking resulting in a fascinatingly complex riesling, the palate textured with herbal notes and slight hints of oxidative characters layered on top of riesling's more usual juicy and zesty citrus-ness with the body and

firm, dry finish enriched and filled out by touches of tannin and relatively high alcohol. One out of left field to think about. 13.1 pc. www.frogmorecreek.com.au

Holm Oak

2011 Sauvignon Blanc, \$25

An elegant, more subtle style with some oak influence adding a little weight and attractive textural smoothness to the palate, the passionfruit, lemon and green pea flavours running to a lovely juicy, beautifully balanced and polished finish. 12.0 pc. www.holmoakvineyards.com.au

Torbreck 2010 Woodcutter's

Rousanne Viognier Marsanne, \$24

Pale green-gold colour, a fairly closed nose with faint suggestions of musk and mandarin zest – I guess from the viognier – before a relatively full and beautifully glycerine-smooth palate with cooked quince flavours on top of a mineral earthiness carrying through to a short but nicely balanced, flint-dry finish. 14.5 pc. www.torbreck.com

Tarrawarra 2010 Viognier

Marsanne Roussanne, \$30

Pale and a surprisingly understated nose before a wonderfully dry, savoury, earthy and mineral palate with background hints of spice and honey coming more to the fore on the finish, the palate nicely light, tight and firmly structured. 13.0 pc. www.tarrawarra.com.au

Tamar Ridge

2009 Botrytis Riesling, \$28

Attractive polished gold colour with the succulent lusciousness of ripe apricots and caramelised citrus segments carried on an elegantly structured, lightweight frame with perfectly balanced acid providing a long, vibrant and beautifully clean finish. 9.0 pc. www.tamaridge.com.au

Kalleske 2011 Rosina, \$18

With small amounts of shiraz and viognier blended with grenache, wild





yeast ferment and three months barrel ageing on lees, this is a substantial and complex drop with the fresh flavours of red apples backed by a savoury and spicy earthiness and a finish that's pleasingly crisp and dry. 12.5 pc. www.kalleske.com

Yering Station Little Yering

2010 Pinot Noir, \$17

Lovely spiced raspberry aromas followed by a palate of attractive lightness and freshness with ripe berry fruit underpinned by subtle savoury notes. A pinot of real charm and great value. 13.5 pc. www.yering.com

Two Bud Spur

2009 Pinot Noir, \$25

Light colour with ripe cherry/plum aromas and flavours, light and softly fleshy in the mouth with good savoury depth and fine tannins providing backbone and length. 13.5 pc. www.twobudspur.com.au

Delamere 2009 Pinot Noir, \$40

Lightish purple-red with ripe plums and savoury smoke, spice and meat stock aromas and flavours, the palate mid-weight, tight and elegantly structured and only just beginning to open up to show the depth and promise of delicious things to come. Give it plenty of air now or another 18 months or so and you'll have a beauty. 13.5 pc. www.delamerevineyards.com.au

Freycinet

2006 Cabernet Merlot, \$34

Raspberry and blackcurrant aromas and flavours, rich, intense, finely textured and elegantly balanced with more savoury olive, bay leaf and mocha-like notes coming more to the fore as it opens in the glass, the wine finishing with lovely fine-grained tannins. Given plenty of air and decanting it's great drinking now, but will be much better five, 10 or even 20 years down the track. 14.0 pc. www.freycinetvineyard.com.au

Babich

2007 Gimblett Road Syrah, \$30

Still a youthful, bright purple colour with intense pepper and spice aromas and a juicy, elegantly weighted and structured palate showing blackberry and dark plum fruits on top of savoury spice and earthy characters with good depth and complexity and a smooth, nicely balanced finish. 13.5 pc. www.babichwines.co.nz

Five-bottle wines

Cloudy Bay

2011 Sauvignon Blanc, \$34

Crushed lime leaves, cut melon, tropical fruits and an underlying herbal and yeasty savouriness adding richness, depth and complexity to the beautifully weighted, balanced and textured palate with none of the coarseness or hard edges and finish that sauv blanc

often displays. Lovely drinking. 13.5 pc. www.cloudybay.co.nz

Chartley Estate

2010 Botrytis Riesling, \$48

Deeply coloured, rich and heavily botrytised with layers of super-intense honey, mandarin and ripe apricot flavours on an opulent, almost syrupy lush palate with tangy acidity keeping the finish wonderfully clean and fresh. 8.0 pc. www.chartleyestatevineyard.com

Grey Sands 2007 Shiraz, \$40

Still a youthful purple-black colour, the nose suggesting black cherries and liquorice with chocolate and aniseed flavours enriching the wonderfully deep, firmly structured and richly flavoured palate – a combination of power and silky elegance with its best years still ahead of it. 14.4 pc. www.greysands.com.au

Craigie Knowe

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon, \$90

This is East Coast pioneer John Austwick's valedictory Bordeaux blend of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, petit verdot and merlot and the new vineyard owners, Gerber Wines, have made the most of it in both the labelling and price. Long one of the best and age-worthy cabernets in the state, either enjoy it now with a glass raised to John or put it away and await the real treasure it will become. 13.5 pc.