

WINE

WHAT'S ON THE SHELF AT WHOLE FOODS

Victoria Moore

They were pouring pomegranate and prosecco at the opening party for Whole Foods, the vulgar yet impossibly compelling American store that's just arrived in London. The wine was Louis Latour (chardonnay and pinot noir), and a lethal-looking drink in swimming pool-sized Martini glasses was nothing more potent than elderflower cordial. Meanwhile, all the journalists ricocheting around the gleaming halls of this extravagant emporium were exchanging the evening's only piece of gossip: "Doesn't Scheherazade Goldsmith look thin huddled in that cardigan."

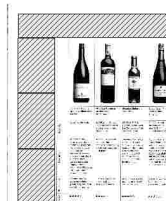
Afterwards, I went back to see not

just what wine they sell, but how they sell it. To what do they think we might aspire? There were piles of an own-brand organic wine (Spanish), of course, but the three wines that assail you, stacked high as you cross the floor, were interesting and summery: an Austrian Grüner Veltliner, a Gros Manseng (the grape that feels glossy, and quickens between the vim of citrus and a warmer, marzipanny, sunflower taste) from Gascony, and lakes of prosecco. Rosé, from the palest, daisy-petal pink to those as richly coloured as stained glass, has its own section. The handful of English wines (mostly Chapel Down) get a good show, too. There are three kinds of sake, a pecorino (my new

favourite grape), and the fridges are filled with interesting things you want to open right away. There are even chilled magnums of three sparkling wines – bounteous, yet affordable – of which I'd go for the airy Jeio Bisol prosecco at £20.99.

What wasn't quite right? The inevitable but pointless ocean of American wine – California Zinfandel alone gets twice as much rack room as New Zealand pinot noir. (Let's hope no one buys it and they have to surrender the space to something else.) The south of France is under-represented. As for the prices, some are fair, but I did spot a few that were a pound too dear.

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	Laurenz V Friendly Grüner Veltliner 2006, Austria	Altos Las Hormigas Malbec 2006, Argentina	Maculan Dindarello 2005, Italy	Chapel Down Pinot Reserve 2002, England
Stockists	£8.99, Whole Foods	£7.49, Whole Foods. There are several other stockists – email me for a full list	£8.49 for 37.5cl, Oddbins; Whole Foods has 75cl bottles of the 2006 at £15.99	£24.99, direct from chapeldownwines.co.uk/shop; £23.99 for the 2001 at Whole Foods
Description	This fashionable Austrian grape has a distinctive, grapefruit sharpness and subtle, rounding spice. Tesco sells the same producer's entry level grüner veltliner – Laurenz und Sophie Singing Gruner – which, at £6.99, is even better value and so worth four stars.	A particularly smooth, but dense, incarnation of this tooth-blackening, stand-your-spoon-up-in-it grape.	This dessert wine from the Veneto is made from air-dried muscat grapes and has strong, rich flavours that are reminiscent of wildflower honey shot through with bright acidity.	A sparkling wine made in Kent from pinot blanc and pinot noir. For my money, the 2002 is much better than the 2001 – beautifully calm and sure of itself, well-knit, with an elegant finish and the scent of summer hedgerows.
Drink it with	Abundant salads; asparagus (white or green); fragrant, fresh-cooked Thai; picnics	Rich beef casseroles; blackened T-bone steaks; empanadas	After dinner instead of pudding, or with soft, salty blue cheese	Just drink it, on a warm summer's day, preferably outside
Score	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆

JAMES JOHNSON (4)

