



Pop open a bottle to fall in love with

Whether you believe in celebrating Valentine's Day or not, you can still enjoy a bottle of something tasty, writes Sharon Walters. Here are a few suggestions from a very good Champagne down to a fruity bottle for £8.

Champagne Taittinger Brut Réserve NV, RRP £47.50, Ocado, Waitrose, Waitrose Cellar, Morrisons, Co-op, Fortnum and Mason, John Lewis, Champagne Direct
A lovely golden colour with a fine lingering mousse. It is light and delicate with hints of peach and brioche. It has great depth, yet is quite light in style with a subtle elegance and a long fresh finish. A great non-vintage brut.

Mionetto Prosecco Rosé NV, RRP £11, Nisa, slurp.co.uk
This is a fresh and delicate wine that has an elegant bouquet of pink peach that combines with small red fruits and grapefruit flavours. A very versatile fizz that will be the perfect aperitif at any festive celebration this year.

♥ Prosecco, RRP £8, Sainsbury, Tesco, Morrisons, Amazon, Slurp.co.uk, Budgens, Costcutter, Londis, Nisa
Great quality Prosecco at a great price. An ideal aperitif and tasty accompaniment to foods such as prosciutto and shellfish.

♥ Prosecco Rosé, RRP £9, Sainsbury, Morrisons, Budgens, Slurp.co.uk, Londis
A fresh and fruity wine which will make you think of warmer weather. Lots of strawberry flavour.

Villa Maria Sauvignon Blush 2022, RRP £12.85, Asda, Morrisons, Tesco
The Blush Sauvignon has aromas of passionfruit and fresh herbs, with a splash of Merlot adding floral blossom and delicate red berry notes. The cool climate within New Zealand's wine-growing regions provides freshness and natural acidity.

Cote des Roses rosé, from £11, Majestic, Tesco, Ocado
A perfect apéritif, this award-winning wine is also a brilliant partner to food, working with a range of dishes from fresh salads like grilled peach and mozzarella, to main courses such as seared fish and subtly spiced dishes. The iconic bottle delicately sculpted into the shape of a rose makes for the perfect table centerpiece. A soft pale pink in colour, on the nose there are inviting aromas of red fruits, blackcurrant and gooseberry, underlined by floral notes of rose and citrusy hints of grapefruit. On the palate the wine has an excellent aromatic persistence, a fresh and delicious finish.



Lasagne al Forno



Pollo Alla Cacciatora



Capesante Gratinata: Fresh king scallops cooked in brandy and cream



Torta Amaretto



Tartufo Classico



Da Gino Italian restaurant, in Streetly

Italian flavours are bravissimo

Heather Large and her husband head to Streetly where they discover an authentic Italian restaurant that hits all the right notes

It may have been cold outside but the welcome at Da Gino Italian Restaurant in Streetly was warm and friendly. As soon as my husband Neil and I stepped through the door, we were greeted by a smiling waitress who showed us to our seats.

It was clear this was a popular spot and we saw couples enjoying romantic meals for two and groups of friends catching up over wine and pasta. Da Gino prides itself on its reputation for freshly prepared food of the highest standards, served at reasonable prices. The spacious venue is spread over two floors with a separate bar lounge. The upstairs can be reserved for conferences, special events, private dining and corporate events. The restaurant offers an extensive menu and we could tell straight away that we were going to be spoilt for choice. We began by perusing the starters which included cold dishes, such as Prosciutto Con Melone and Paté Della Casa and hot dishes such as Calamari Fritti and Minestrone Alla Casalinga. After giving it much thought, we decided to share the Capesante Gratinata – fresh king scallops cooked in brandy and cream, finished

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under the grill and dusted with parmesan. It's very rare that we have scallops so it felt like a real treat. Served in two scallop shells, they were beautifully cooked. They had a tender texture and tasted slightly sweet. The creamy sauce went so well with the delicate shellfish. I think by the end we were both regretting the decision to share as we could have eaten more of this delicious starter. When it came to choosing a main course, it took some time to narrow it down due to the vast selection of pasta, rice, fish, seafood, chicken, beef, veal and lamb dishes. In the end, my husband, who I expected to choose the Fettucine Al Salmone, surprised me by deciding to opt for a classic – Lasagne al Forno. On the menu it was described as layers of pasta and ragu bolognese with lashings of mozzarella and béchamel sauce.

All of the pasta dishes were available in starter-sized portions as well as main courses. When Neil's lasagne arrived, I admit I felt a little bit jealous – it looked amazing. Covered in melted mozzarella and thick sauce, it was a generous portion and the ragu bolognese was full of flavour. It tasted as good as it looked, he told me. I had chosen the Pollo Alla Cacciatora, described as supreme chicken breast, pan fried with olive oil, topped with tomato sauce made with onions, garlic, mushrooms, white wine and Mediterranean herbs. My lasagne jealousy disappeared as soon as I tasted the first mouthful. The sauce, which also contained sweet bell peppers, was a delight and the chicken was perfectly cooked. I was really happy with my choice. The succulent chicken was accompanied by a side dish full of crispy roast potatoes, carrots and broccoli. After our empty plates had been taken away, we were handed the desserts and drinks menu and told to take our time. We were keen to sample the desserts but were starting to feel a bit full so we were happy to wait a bit before ordering. The menu included a selection of sweets and a cheeseboard as well as coffees, teas and liqueurs. The restaurant offers a 'dessert of the day' option and a daily cheesecake, which on the night we visited was vanilla.

Covered in mozzarella and sauce, the lasagne was a generous portion

I'd never had semifreddo gelato before so wasn't entirely sure what to expect from this dessert. I found it to be soft and creamy, and more like a mousse than an ice cream. It was absolutely delicious. All of the staff that served us were friendly and eager to please, they really did their best to look after us.

I could tell by looking around the room that we weren't the only ones enjoying the food and atmosphere at Da Gino. It was the first time we had visited the restaurant and we will definitely return in the future now we know just how good it is. When you're looking for tasty and authentic Italian food, you definitely can't go wrong with Da Gino.

SAMPLE MENU	
STARTERS	Pollo Fiorentina
Minestrone Alla Casalinga (V)	Supreme chicken breast, pan fried, served on a bed of spinach and cheese sauce £17.95
Calamari Fritti	
Squid rings dusted with seasoned flour, deep fried served with homemade tartar sauce £8.95	
DESSERTS	
Fettucine Al Salmone	Tiramisu della Casa
Pasta ribbons with salmon strips cooked in a splash of white wine, a touch of tomato sauce and cream £15.95	Layers of sponge soaked with liqueur and coffee, filled with zabaglione and coffee cream, dusted with a rich cocoa powder £6.95
	Panna Cotta Con Caramello
	Traditional Italian dessert made with fresh cream and vanilla, topped with caramel sauce £6.95



Bringing home the Burgundy

It would be pretty easy to argue for Burgundy being the single most traditional wine region around the world. Of course wine is steeped in history and tradition almost wherever it is planted – in Lebanon with its temples dedicated to Bacchus the god of wine, and even right here in Shropshire with evidence of viticulture dating back to the Romans. But the Burgundians with their fastidious approach and focus on terroir, as well as the strict labelling, I think about top it. So this week I've chosen to celebrate tradition and opted for a red from one of Burgundy's most famous houses, Louis Latour, who have been producing wines since the 1760s. My top tipple is their Bourgogne Gamay, a wine produced from grapes grown in the further flung parts of the region and from one of the region's perhaps lesser, but still delicious, varieties, Gamay. The wine itself is red fruit forward and, given that it's ready to drink, has more than manageable tannin so don't expect it to dry your mouth. Like most Gamay wines it would benefit from being served at room temperature – cooler than many reds. The grape variety and where it's grown also makes the wine affordable – £13 if you use your Tesco clubcard – and offers an interesting way to access a region where the top wines can go for thousands of pounds each. Cheers!

Louis Latour Bourgogne Gamay, Tesco, £13
Find more of Ed's recommendations on Instagram @drinkswithed



Winter-friendly fireside reds

In the depths of winter thoughts turn to comfort food, feel-good recipes and great wines when you come in from the cold. Even more so if you've abstained through January. Here's a selection to sample...

Saracosa Governo Rosso 2021, Toscana IGT, Italy, £19.99, Laitwhaites
A special treat, especially if you've been looking forward to the first drop of red wine this year. Awarded 98 points by a leading Italian wine critic, this tip top Tuscan offers rich, well-defined flavours of black cherry, violets and sweet spice, with echoes of mocha and vanilla. Pair with pappardelle pasta with slow-cooked beef and mushrooms.

Asda Extra Special Merlot 2021, Colchagua Valley, Chile, £7
A beautifully smooth merlot which strikes the perfect balance between ripe, juicy red berry fruit and caressing tannins. Loaded with layers of dark plummy fruit, cherry, dark chocolate and vanilla, think sausage and tomato bake or hearty pasta. Great value too.

Wynns Coonawarra Estate Shiraz 2021, Australia, £14.99, or £11.99 to mix six, Majestic
A rhapsody of blackberry fruits, rich yet polished, floral, peppery, silky fruits show plenty of freshness with soft acidity and gentle tannins. Impressive to the last drop with a smooth, lingering finish.

