

Wine of the week: one of the most underrated reds on the planet



by **Matthew Jukes**

2005 Saumur-Champigny, Château du Hureau, Philippe et Georges Vatan, Loire, France (£9.40, Haynes, Hanson & Clark of London, 020-7584 7927).

The only time that a bottle of claret is allowed to see the light of day in the summer is if you're having a particularly flash dinner party, or, heaven forbid, a formal Sunday lunch. Even then, I'd rather you keep this elemental style of wine

under stairs waiting for the autumn to roll in. In its place all manner of smart Spanish, Italian and other-worldly creations have the chance to frolick across your tablecloth and be admired by your thirsty (and hopefully grateful) guests.

But before you get too carried away with your Ribera del Dueros and Supertuscans, spare a thought for one of the most underrated styles of red wine on the planet. Top flight red Loire, from a

great vintage and great producer, can cost as little as a tenner. The Cabernet Franc grape (which is so important on the Right Bank of Bordeaux – where would Cheval Blanc be without it?) performs miracles on the banks of the Loire and 2005 is a dix sur dix vintage. Dark, briary fruit, with intensity and power coats this superbly juicy, yet freshly herbal wine. Decant it and challenge your pals to name a village and a price – I bet you'll have a hatful of Saint-Emilions and even more guesses of £30! Don't miss Vatan's tour de force. Long live Cabernet Franc.

● A winner of the *International Wine & Spirit Competition's Communicator of the Year Trophy*, Matthew Jukes is author of *The Wine List 2007: The Top 250 Wines of the Year (£9.99, Headline)*.

