



Cooler Kings

Rick Staff
with a remit to sniff, taste,
and spit his way around Nanjing
and disseminate the drinkable.

POINT SYSTEM

0-10	A WARNING
11-14	A Feasible Party Prop
15-17	Heartily Recommended
17-19	Exceptionally Good
20	The Apoogee Of

WINE EXPRESSION

If you have ever been paralysed by the advice 'drink at room temperature' for red wine, that is because you are intelligent. It leaves you with a baffling range of possibilities, and if there is a room out there at the correct temperature for the wine then quoting that room's temperature is surely more useful. Temperature does play a vital role in the flavour of any wine, and many a red wine served at the fabled mark is rendered soupy and flat by being drunk too warm, owing to the advice being coined before more modern heating methods. Reds should not be shy of the fridge to achieve optimum taste, and a rough outline, notwithstanding eccentric personal preferences, is that even the chunky and tannic reds, such as a rich Barolo or a weighty Bordeaux, ought not to rise much above 18 degrees Celsius, and the medium bodied brigade, Pinotage, Pinot Noir, Tempranillo, Cabernet Franc, and Grenache amongst others, should not be scared to go a couple of degrees cooler still. Many red wines will benefit from chilling substantially further, not least the lighter and brighter Beaujolais wines which make delicious heat salvers after a few hours in the refrigerator and tuned into something circa 10°C (akin to a medium-bodied rosé).

A fine example from the mid-weight category is the superbly priced Armand Dartois Ventoux 2011 which has a savoury and satisfying Grenache driven textural grip with a chocolaty tinge, all of which is lifted to a light and spicy flourish at around 12°C; this wine currently punts for just ¥45 from Metro (16.5 points). Of the light reds I am currently most struck by the unruffled simplicity of the Vonnier Beaujolais Villages 2011 (Metro, ¥69), clarion and poised with cherries to the fore bringing enough grip and structure, enhanced by the time spent in the cooler, to steer it from lightweight triviality, and thus effortlessly collecting 17.5 points. On a much heavier note port wine, of the more golden, tawny, hue, is a surprising foil for an August day in Nanjing. Don Pablo Tawny from Metro is my local pick (¥79), this is a humbler tawny which can make for a great port in a heat storm as this will manfully survive a chilling to sub 10°C with all its faculties' intact still retaining that delicious smack of caramel and marzipan; a refreshing yet pleasingly mellow fellow (16.5 points).

Whites, on the other hand, are all too often being frozen to within an inch of their lives. That bottle with enticingly cold tears rolling down the sides, pleasingly numbing to the touch at this time of year, is really most usefully employed as a cold press against your forehead until it climbs to at least 10 degrees. The Paul Mas Sauvignon Blanc 2007 (BHG, ¥199), a stylishly marketed and increasingly prevalent Languedoc producer, which when served cool rather than cold allows a perfect cut-grass Sauvignon Blanc accent to mingle with an otherwise stifled light dusting of gooseberry, along with citrus and a trace of nut, all conspiring to a beguiling effect on temper and spirit. Essential summer drinking (16.5 points).

Thicker and richer, the Delicato Discovery Bay Viognier 2012 from California (Metro ¥108) has an array of tropical fruit perfumed by peaches and apricot, where a little innate 'greenness' together with a chill factor of around 11/12 °C (too cold and you will lose those fruit perfumed aromas) assuages any soporific tendencies, keeping it all firm and taut and zippily refreshing. One glass and you are on holiday (16 points). **N**

