

Three of the best



**Demencia,
Bierzo, 2008**
Startling
marzipan nose
and intense, dark
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A cult wine
(£34.99,
thewineryuk.
com)

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Les Quarterons, Etienne et Sébastien Riffault

Sancerre, 2010
Juicy citrus tang,
herbal geranium
leaf and chalk.
Full-bodied, but
not as scary as
some natural
examples
(£14.99,
raeburnfine



Vacqueyras 'Fruits Sauvage', Domaine Le Clos de Caveau, 2011

Upfront, rambling
forest fruits and a
ticklish dryness,
easy and uplifting
red with spicy
undertones
(£17.95,
swig.co.uk)

ON THE BOTTLE

KATE SPICER



Naked pleasures

Natural wines can look cloudy, and taste like silage on the mistral, but they beat some of the chemically wrangled and sterile wines that clutter the shelves of supermarkets where 80% of wine is bought.

Stripped naked of additives and processes, save a pinch of stabilising sulphur dioxide for all but the purists, the finished product is surprising and fractious. These wines are perfect for a jaded palate. To get into the RAW, the Artisan Wine Fair in London, a maker must dismiss all additives except a nominal amount of SO₂.

The enjoyment of natural wines is enhanced by less tangible elements, such as a philosophy of sustainability and a romance that has more appeal in an age of skint than the money-grubbing luxurists in Bordeaux.

After three hours at RAW and 100 glasses of wine, I stood back out on Brick Lane in my spittoon-flecked white jacket like a forlorn pub singer. The words "funky", and "cidery" continued to repeat on me.

Life's too short for a rotten drink, and interesting wine isn't always the same as good wine. My love affair was over.

There had been winners. One from Spain, the unfortunately named Demencia, caused gleeful spontaneous

non-verbal noises. But the damage had been done. I had recommended Mencap, the charity

I support, to take some of their ambassadors to Terroirs, a restaurant with an all-natural list. Sitting next to Norma Major, my post-RAW crisis of faith had me twittering anxiously about how these wines aren't to everyone's taste. "It seems perfectly nice and smooth to me," said Mrs Major, "but then I'm not a wine buff." I didn't ask her what her husband drinks with his frozen peas. Curious drinkers will have to seek out the 0.01% of the market that is natural, and I hope they find the 0.001% that make the search worthwhile.

If I can find a moral to this story, it is never wear a white jacket for wine-tasting. The tux was toast ■

