

## FESTIVE DRINKS

# Raise a glass

Anne Giacomantonio toasts the season with a selection of tipples to tantalise your taste buds

## TALISKER MALT WHISKY GIFT SET

There is a school of thought that says you either like the Scottish Islay malts or you prefer the lower phenol content (the thing that gives malts their peaty distinctive taste) Speyside malts. I don't adhere to those guidelines but I am keen on the rich, smooth and deeply warming texture of a dram of Talisker. The romance of the distilleries location also adds to its fabulous colour and taste. You can imagine the ageing ex-bourbon and sherry casks stacked in the warehouse by Loch Harport under the towering Cullin Hills. This gift set includes the 10 Year Old, the Distiller's Edition and the 18 Year Old to get your taste buds warmed to the merits of the Islay malt whiskeys.

**How much:** £40

**Where from:** [www.johnlewis.co.uk](http://www.johnlewis.co.uk)



## ST-GERMAIN ELDERFLOWER LIQUEUR

One for the delicate palettes on the festive guest list, this distinctive elderflower liqueur will go well with champagne, white wine or gin-based drinks. Made from fresh, hand-picked elderflowers from the French Alps, the beauty of the bottle gives you a indication of the delicious liqueur contained within. The drink has the unique, clean flavour that only elderflowers produce, with hints of juicy pear and lychee. Lovely on a hot summer's day, it's a beautiful gift that would be the perfect addition to any drinks cabinet.

**How much:** £25

**Where from:** [www.harveynichols.com](http://www.harveynichols.com)



## BLACK ISLE ORGANIC YELLOW HAMMER 4% ABV

Proud winner of best beer at the Soil Associations Organic Food Awards 2008 this tasty little ale is brewed with Cascade hops by Black Isle Brewery in Scotland. The judges said, "Seductive honeycomb and beeswax scent and taste. Very fine floral palette with a fine faintly Muscat scented finish. Admirable and unusual level of complexity, lots of well balanced different notes." Aside from the notes it beat a field of 36 organic beers from across the country.

**How much:** £2.35 a bottle plus postage.

**Where from:** [www.blackislebrewery.com](http://www.blackislebrewery.com)



## CHÂTEAU DU BREUIL 15

This delicious calvados hales from the cider apple orchards of Normandy, France. Château du Breuil 15 has a fruity fragrance from the apples and a deep and voluptuous texture with a golden honey colour from the oak casks it's aged in. Perfect for sipping by the fire but also great in cocktails. Calvados does not improve once it is bottled so you are free to enjoy as much as you like.

**How much:** £46.50

**Where from:** [www.royalmilewhiskies.com](http://www.royalmilewhiskies.com)



## PIMM'S WINTER CUP GIFT BAG

Summery Pimm's No.1 Cup's older wiser brother, Pimm's Winter Cup will warm you to the cockles when combined with warm apple juice and a slice of orange. Winter Cup is brandy-based and richly spiced with notes of citrus zest. Complete the festive picture with a gift bag including a clear glass teapot from which to pour generous amounts, retro inspired tea cosy and fingerless gloves. A lovely gift that would sustain the recipient though a long, cold January.

**How much:** £24.99

**Where from:** [www.anyoneforpimms.com](http://www.anyoneforpimms.com)



## NYETIMBER CLASSIC CUVEE 2001 VINTAGE

Celebrate the gathering of family and friends in style with this award-winning Sussex cuvee. Pale yellow in colour with a nose of "honey, hazelnut, almond, marmalade, biscuity with lemon, floral and subtly toasty notes" to get your taste buds buzzing. The palate promises a full body, honey and toast with lime undertones, and a rich yet delicate mousse (fizz). With the doom and gloom of global warming causing English wines to become more and more celebrated in the international wine community, why not celebrate along with them.

**How much:** £24.99

**Where from:** [www.waitrosewine.com](http://www.waitrosewine.com)



## BELVEDERE VODKA CHRISTMAS GIFT BOX

At Christmas there are times when most of us just need a good martini and a chill on the sofa. Look no further than the Belvedere vodka Christmas gift box. Polish Belvedere vodka has a subtle, clean finish that only quality vodka can deliver. Distilled four times in small batches it's named after the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw, which was previously the home of the Polish royal family and presidents. The gift box contains a handy shaker and cocktail booklet.

**How much:** £31.75

**Where from:** [www.drinkon.com](http://www.drinkon.com)

## DAMSON GIN

Clear gin is no longer enough for the connoisseur - for the festive period something special is required. This beautifully crafted South Devon damson gin from Bramley and Gage is made by the same method as their sloe gin, with hedge-gathered whole fruit and no artificial colourings or preservatives. The resulting damson gin is slightly sweeter and smoother. Perfect in cocktails (try the recipe on the Bramley and Gage website). It's nice to give something a little out of the ordinary this Christmas.

**How much:** £13.20

**Where from:** [www.bramleyandgage.co.uk](http://www.bramleyandgage.co.uk)



## PARTIDA AÑEJO TEQUILA (AGED 18 MONTHS)

Tequila can strike fear into many a seasoned drinker with a reputation for hard partying and petrol-tasting firewater. However, Partida Añejo is an exception to the rule. This luxury tequila drinks more like a malt than a slammer and would ideal for a cosy night in. With flavours of honey, chocolate and sweet pear, and an aroma that warms the senses, this tequila makes a perfect festive indulgence. *The Independent* foodie Mark Hix is a fan - what more reason do you need?

**How much:** £70

**Where from:** [www.harveynichols.com](http://www.harveynichols.com)



## TRIANA PEDRO XIMENEZ VIEJO SHERRY

Connoisseurs of the finer thing in life, Jeroboams have recommended this tasty little sherry to complement your Christmas pud. Dark, rich and sweet, this sherry is made by the Hildalgo firm who have been perfecting their art since 1792 on the same premises in Spain. The sherry itself is made from sun-dried grapes left to become sweet raisins before pressing. What results is an opulent plum, fig and caramel flavour sherry with prunes and raisins on the nose.

**How much:** £12.75

**Where from:** [www.jeroboams.co.uk](http://www.jeroboams.co.uk)