



## MAX ALLEN

● People are often surprised when I tell them I buy wine. "But don't you get wine sent to you for free?" they ask, quivering with incredulous envy. Well, yes, I do. But reviewing free wine samples – no matter how delicious – is work; shopping for wine is fun.

I'm a compulsive wine browser. I find it impossible to walk or drive past a bottle shop – especially a good one – without popping in and having a bit of a poke around. I know I should be more sensible and save money by planning ahead and buying by the dozen and putting myself on mailing lists. But there's something deeply satisfying about scanning shelves, hunting in dark corners and coming across a case of wine you know is brilliant but thought had sold out, or stumbling across a bottle you've never heard of that's just begging to be opened and tried.

There are two wines I can't get enough of right now and buy whenever I see them. The first is a stunning Italian red I discovered at a local bottle shop while waiting to pick up some takeaway from the fish and chip shop next door. It's the 2001 Angheli from Donnafugata, one of the top new wave producers in Sicily. **The wine is a magnificent blend of merlot and the local nero d'avola grape, and is a seamless, seductive combination of ripe, plush, well-mannered dark berry fruit and deeply earthy, gutsy southern Italian rusticity.** Great on its own, it shines with full-flavoured meaty dishes. (Luckily I'd ordered a hamburger with the lot rather than battered flake.)

At \$44 a bottle, the Angheli is hardly your regular Friday night takeaway wine; I'm planning something a bit posher, such as Sunday lunch leg of lamb, for the next bottle. The wines of Donnafugata are imported by Arquilla: visit [arquilla.com](http://arquilla.com) or phone (02) 9560 9733.

My other fave at the moment is the 2002 Henschke Johann's Garden, a magnificently spicy, dark-juicy, vibrant red, and easily one of the best Barossa grenache shiraz blends from a vintage that produced an embarrassment of great examples of the style. The last time I bought a bottle I paid a whisker under \$30 and was determined to stick it away in a dark place for a few years, but wouldn't you know, I drank it (with chicken and mushroom pie and great relish), so I'll just have to go out and buy some more now.

Henschke wines are distributed nationally by Tucker Seabrook: visit [tucker.com.au](http://tucker.com.au) or phone (02) 9666 0000. ©