

In this week's Tipping's Tipples, Mike Tipping wonders if more expensive wine really does taste better



- **Tagonius Tinto Roble 2004, £7.75, from www.fromvineyards-direct.com (minimum order of two cases) 19/20**
- **Alexander Fontein Merlot 2006, £7.99 at Morrisons 18/20**
- **Errazuriz Organics Cabernet Sauvignon 2005, £9.99 at Oddbins 19/20**

EVERYTHING seems a little gloomy at the moment. We don't seem to have had any daylight for weeks and the economy appears on the brink of collapse. Maybe when summer is here we will all be feeling a little brighter.

In the meantime, you should find stimulation for your medial orbitofrontal cortex, that's the bit of your brain that tells you you're enjoying something.

Interestingly, boffins at a university in California (where else?) have found that because people expect wines that cost more to be of higher quality, they trick themselves into believing the wines provide a more pleasurable experience than less expensive ones.

They reported experiencing pleasure at significantly greater levels when told the wine cost more and at the same time their medial orbitofrontal cortexes, showed significant activity.

It's claimed that this may change the way that wine is marketed in the future. All I can say is that I am sure the Champagne houses and the great Chateaux of Bordeaux are already aware of the marketing value of a price tag, as well as of a famous name.

The following reds stimulated my medial orbitofrontal cortex recently, to the extent that I rated all three very highly. None of

them are too expensive either, but don't let that put you off.

Firstly, a Spanish wine from Madrid which comes in a bottle thick enough to withstand a nuclear strike. Tagonius Tinto Roble 2004 is a delightful blend of the Iberian tempranillo grape with cabernet sauvignon, merlot and syrah. It is perfectly balanced, and at a reasonable price, with cherry and raspberry fruit, spices, supple tannins and a long finish.

Merlot often promises and doesn't deliver, but I was really surprised by an example hailing from the Darling area of Cape Town in South Africa. Alexander Fontein Merlot 2006 is modern and jammy but in a good way, with oodles of raspberry, plum, bramble, coffee, smoky oak and soft tannins.

It seems Errazuriz's organic ventures are paying off, if its Organics Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 is anything to go by.

Made from grapes grown in part of the Chilean producer's Maximiano estate, set aside as organic in 2000, it has mouth-filling tannins, mint and blueberry aromas, with blackberry, cassis, coconut and dark chocolate on the palate.

