



A Rosé by any other name

Wine drinkers (and even some wine experts) dismiss pink wines as sweet, frivolous ... not real wine. They're under-appreciated because they're misunderstood.

Blush, Rose, White Zinfandel ... What's the difference? How are pink wines made? And if they're not "serious," why are they consistently among the best-selling wines in the U.S.?

What's in a name?

Pink wines are called Rosé in France, Rosato in Italy and Rosado in Spain. California typically refers to its pinks as White Zinfandel and Blush. The two main categories of pink wine are:

Sweet and fruity...

Wines like Blush and White Zinfandel, are fresh, easy to drink and often inexpensive. Many novice wine drinkers begin with these sweeter, less sophisticated wines. Because of the dominant fruitiness, they pair less easily with food but make a great cocktail.

...and Dry Rosés

Most dry rosé wines come from warmer climates and are filled with the flavor of sun-ripened fruit. Like Champagne, rosés pair with almost anything, from barbecued ribs to

crown roast of pork. They can also be enjoyed as a cocktail or with light fare, including snacks, appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, cold cuts and salads. They should be consumed young and well-chilled.

Lighter rosés share more white wine characteristics, such as lower-to-medium alcohol levels and bright acidity. The darker rosés can be substituted for light red wines, such as Beaujolais or Pinot Noir.

The "King" of dry rosés is Tavel, from the Côtes du Rhône region in France. Generous and deep in color with hints of tannin, these wines are most often made from Grenache grapes blended with Cinsault.

South of the Côtes du Rhône region is the Côtes de Provence, where rosés are made from grape varieties including Grenache, Cinsault, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Carignan. These wines pair well with Mediterranean dishes such as bouillabaisse, aioli and grilled vegetables.

In the Languedoc-Roussillon region along the French Mediterranean coast, vineyards can produce pale wines called "Vin Gris" and "Vin des Sables." If not for their pale, pinkish-grey tint, they might be mistaken for white wines.

Other dry rosés can be found in Algeria, Tunisia Morocco and Portugal.

How pink wine get its color

The classic way to make rosé is by the saignée method, which requires the skins of crushed red grapes to be in contact with the juice for just long enough to shade the wine pink.

Because pink wines have little grape skin contact, they contain very low levels of tan-

nin. They should be consumed young and fresh, within three years of bottling.

If the contact time between juice and skins is prolonged, the resulting wine will be darker. Red wines have had considerable contact time; whites have had little or none.

Pink wine can also be created by the careful mixing of reds and whites; mass-produced blush wines are often made by blending.

When to drink pink

Most wine lovers think of blush or rosé in warm weather. But it's not a mistake to "drink pink" in the spring. A fruity, slightly tannic Tavel or Côte du Rhône rosé will pair well with lamb tenderloin or honey glazed ham at Easter.

Pink wines are popular because they're versatile, easy to drink and inexpensive. You don't have to be a connoisseur or acquire a taste to enjoy them as you might a tannic blockbuster red.

So, the next time you're in the mood for fun, don't check Wine Spectator to see what you're supposed to like. Think pink and join the growing ranks of wine lovers who are looking at the world through rosé colored glasses.

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