

# Rosé Redux: The Pink Season Arrives

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WineInk



## Under The Influence

Ioppa Rusin Colline Novaresi Nebbiolo Rosé 2019

And for something completely different: how about an Italian rosé from the north near Piedmont made from 100% Nebbiolo grapes? “Great acidity and minerality with elegant aromatics and great balance” is how Johnny Ivansco, wine manager at Sopris Wine and Liquors, defines this gem that provides a very different rosé experience for just \$16.99.

Close your eyes. Picture yourself, sunglasses on, head tossed back on a teak chaise lounge as you linger beside an infinity pool flowing over the edge of a cliff that drops to an azure sea spread out 1,000 feet below. There is a smell of lavender in the air and hummingbirds flit from flower to flower in the honeysuckle as a perfect coastal breeze cools your skin in the hot summer sun.

Without being summoned, a white-jacketed waiter magically appears with a tray with a single glass and a bottle of wine. “Mademoiselle?” (or, perhaps, “Monsieur?”) he asks, pointing to the bottle. You nod subtly in acceptance and, without opening your eyes, know instinctively what has been poured.

It is, of course, a glass of rosé. Such is the promise of Provence.

Over the past decade, rosé has become the “it” wine. In four years, from 2016 to 2020, sales in American liquor stores rose nearly 300% according to Nielson research. As supply has exploded and quality improved, millennials, the emergent wine market,

embraced the trendy wines.

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“I used to have to beg people to try rosé at the Food & Wine Classic,” said Paul Chevalier, vice president national fine wine director for Shaw-Ross Imports, who represents the wines of Château D’Esclans made in Provence, including the famed Whispering Angel. “Now we are amongst the most popular wines under the tent.” Make that the world. The cherubic angels that grace the pink bottles have become iconic on summer nights around the globe.

Though rosé is made in virtually every wine region on Earth these days, the sweet spot for it is Provence, the French wine region nestled in the lavender covered hills between the Alps and the Mediterranean coast. The abundant sunshine and the varied soils (limestone/clay/schist) provide for a textbook environment to produce the wines from a variety of red grapes, including grenache, syrah, cinsault, cabernet sauvignon, mourvedre and more in varying combinations. Much of the allure for the growth in the market is that rosé provides not just sunshine in a glass, but a touch of luxury at an affordable price.

Memorial Day in America has just passed, so it is time once again to wear white and drink pink. As we are still banned from Air France, I took a car trip, just up and down the Roaring Fork Valley, in search of a few bottles of the latest vintage, 2019, of Provence rosé, that would provide the appropriate joie de vivre.

At El Jebeverage in, well, El Jebel, Martine Mendoza (yes, like the Argentine wine region) suggested a bottle of AIX Rosé made in the Coteaux d’Aix-en-Provence, the region’s westernmost wine growing area. “We like it because it is a dry rosé (sans sweet) with great balance.” And at \$18 it is a bargain.

Not far away, I stopped in at Four Dogs Wine & Spirits, which has a prodigious display of pink wines. It seems the midvalley likes rosé. As a fan of Michel Chapoutier, I cheated a bit, opting for a bottle of 2019 Côtes-du-Rhône “Belleruche,” the region just north of Provence. Led by grenache, with parts of cinsault and syrah, the wine is delicious and is priced at just \$15.97.

A stop in the Grog Shop in Aspen showed a pair of higher-end Provençal faves from Côtes de Provence. Château Miraval, founded by this year’s Academy Award-winning actor Brad Pitt and ex-wife Angelina Jolie with famed Châteauneuf-du-Pape maker Marc Perrin, is one of the most beloved rosé bottlings on the planet due to the pedigree of the producers. But it is also a luxury pour for \$30 a bottle. Another beauty, a Château Minuty 2019 “M” Prestige Rosé, sat nearby making for difficult choice.

And finally, at Carl’s Pharmacy, Maurice Eaton suggested a Provence rosé with a local connection, the 2019 Bieler Pere & Fils “Sabine” produced in France by regular Aspen visitor Charles Bieler and his father. They are true pioneers, making and importing wines from Provence to the U.S. for close to three decades. Charles was selling the wines out of his pink Cadillac and rolled through Aspen last summer. Fourteen dollars and 40 cents is all you need to pick up a bottle.

No other wine defines a lifestyle, that of a summer afternoon on the Riviera, as does rosé from Provence. Simply sipping a glass of the pink-hued elixir, with its fresh, clean fruit flavors and refreshing crisp acidity, can transport you to that cliffside hotel where the air is warm, the service impeccable, and cares are nonexistent.

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