

MYTH BUSTERS

about

ROSÉ WINES

in general and

PROVENCE

ROSÉ WINES

in particular

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PROVENCE
le Goût du Style

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Rosé, the wine that's so easy to drink, yet so difficult to make. The wine that implores you to "seize the day" and enjoy the carefree moments of the present, whilst also boasting a history that spans three thousand years...

When it comes to the iconic colour of Provence wines, contradictions abound. This explains why some myths, such as the image of rosé as a simple wine with no history, persist today.

But other factors are also at work and help perpetuate a number of myths embedded in the popular psyche. In a world where wine consumption has stalled, or even declined, rosé wines have grown constantly over the past twenty years. The crossover in the curves may have sent out the wrong meaning and implied that such a popular wine in a challenging period for the industry may not be totally legitimate.

Furthermore, French national and even social history seems to have made rosé into a wine that is to be enjoyed only in the summer. Provence's vineyards are located at the end of the famous Nationale 7 road – long nicknamed the 'holiday route' – as Charles Trenet used to sing, thereby associating rosé with the holiday season.

At a time when people like to make sense of the products they eat and drink, though, the time has come to debunk these myths and restore the full complexity, depth and diversity of rosé wines. And that's precisely what this little guide intends to do!

ROSÉ, A WINE WITH NO HISTORY



WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because it is **one of history's oldest wines!** In Antiquity, wines produced across the Mediterranean rim, first in Greece and later throughout the Roman Empire, were all very light-coloured wines. The grapes were crushed and the juice immediately began fermenting. There was no contact with the must, no vatting or ageing, so the wines were very lightly coloured. In France, or French-speaking countries, they were referred to during the Middle Ages or the Renaissance as 'clairret', 'claret', 'pearl grey' or 'partridge-eye pink' depending on the region. In **1680**, lexicographer César-Pierre Richelet published one of the first French language dictionaries. Under the letter R, he mentioned **use of the adjective 'rosé' to describe a wine** "similar to the colour of a bright red rose". He quoted two examples of usage: "It is an excellent rosé wine", and "To like rosé wine". What more is there to say?!

Rosé wines are akin to the wines of Antiquity. Rosés have therefore been being made in Provence for over 2,500 years.

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, the cradle of French winegrowing, rosé wine has been produced for 2,500 years. It took a while to become the region's speciality, though, because rosé was extremely prevalent throughout history, even when winegrowing headed north. In fact, the expression 'rosé wine', which was coined at the end of the 17th century, emerged in the Argenteuil area, near Paris. Only later would rosé become a speciality of Provence. Whilst other wine regions turned their backs on the colour when production of red wines started to surge in the 17th century, Provence would remain true to rosé, choosing the most appropriate grape varieties and vineyard sites and honing ancient winemaking techniques. Its specialisation gained greater traction in the 20th century, when production moved upmarket and the share of rosés increased. Provence is still the only wine region where rosé accounts for over 90% of the volume produced.



- I WOULD SAY ROSÉ WAS INVENTED IN THE 20TH CENTURY..
- BC OR AD ?



- ANYBODY CAN MAKE ROSÉ...
- OF COURSE. PROVIDED YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT SOILS AND GRAPE VARIETIES, HAVE A SUITABLE CLIMATE, HAVE MASTERED PRESSING, SETTLING AND FERMENTATION TECHNIQUES, CAN BLOCK MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION AND ARE PROFICIENT AT BLENDING...

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, winegrowers have developed specific winemaking techniques to preserve the freshness of the crop – this is the direct-to-press method. As soon as the grapes arrive at the winery, they go straight to press, where the juice is delicately separated from the skins. The first juice is collected partially or entirely, then the fine sediment is removed. Only the clear juice is kept and taken straight to temperature-controlled fermenters. The resultant wines are a pale pink with their hallmark crisp fruit on the palate. Other winegrowers prefer the skin-contact maceration method where the berries are destemmed and crushed and the must soaks in a tank (for up to 20 hours) at a temperature of 10 to 15°C. The must is then pressed to separate the juice which is fermented for a week at low temperatures.

ROSÉ IS SIMPLE TO MAKE



WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because it's a wine that requires **expertise and experience**. In fact, some say it is the wine that needs the greatest precision! Contrary to what some entrenched beliefs suggest, rosé is not made by mixing red and white wine. Neither can you make rosé without carefully considering the **quality of the grapes**, as it is only fruit of impeccable quality that lends the wines their exuberance and clean aromatics, both crucial elements of an enjoyable and delicious rosé. So top rosé producers are also consummate winegrowers. **Conditions for harvesting** are also of paramount importance – the fruit is often harvested in the cool early hours of the morning and even by night, to preserve its quality. Similarly, choosing the right window for harvesting depending on each variety and the vintage is essential. In addition, the **first hours after harvesting are critical** to limit oxidation and avoid an untimely start to spontaneous fermentation. Decisions must be made quickly, requiring a blend of precise analysis and a fast-working, positive mindset.

Rosé requires impeccable fruit and substantial control over winemaking techniques. In Provence, winegrowers have perfected the direct-to-press method which promotes aromatic expression.

ALL ROSÉS ARE THE SAME!



WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because worldwide, there are **myriad styles**, depending on the grape varieties used, the vineyard sites, the ripeness of the crop and the choice of winemaking techniques. Technically, rosé can be made from all black grapes, both as single-varietal and blends – Cabernet Franc, Cabernet-Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot, Gamay, Malbec, Grenache, Carignan, Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Syrah, as well as grape varieties that are fairly uncommon in France such as Tempranillo, Sangiovese and Zinfandel. In terms of profile, there are dry rosés but also sweet, medium-sweet and sparkling rosés. France is the world's leading country in terms of production, followed by the United States and Spain, but rosé is also made in Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Austria, Argentina, Chile, South Africa and Australia, significantly **broadening the range of approaches**. Global rosé production rose from 20 million hectolitres in 2002 to 26.4 million in 2018, an increase of 31%.

Like all wines, rosés are very site-sensitive. In Provence, the combination of climate, grape varieties and expertise has made the region a unique location for producing dry, very light and aromatic rosés.

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, where approximately 40% of French appellation-labelled (AOC) rosés are made, rosé wines display an iconic, pale and highly aromatic profile. But within this standard profile are numerous subtleties stemming from the choices made by winegrowers and site-specific characteristics. The Provence wine region is home to three different appellations: AOC Côtes de Provence; AOC Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence and AOC Coteaux Varois en Provence. In fact, the first one is home to five smaller terroir designations, which are each entitled to their own specific geographic designation. The appellations have distinctive soil types, weather patterns, elevations, proximity to the Mediterranean and wind exposure. This eclectic combination is further bolstered by the variety of authorised grape varieties, including the rare Tibouren variety.



- WITH ROSÉ, THE BOTTLE IS WHAT YOU CHOOSE FIRST.
- IT'S TRUE THAT IT CAN BE A FACTOR. BUT YOU KNOW, THERE ARE OTHERS. THE ORIGIN, THE WINEGROWER'S STYLE, THE PROFILE OF THE WINE, THE VINTAGE... SHALL I EXPLAIN?



- I'VE GOT SOME 2019 ROSÉ LEFT, WHAT SHALL I DO WITH IT?
- DRINK IT, OF COURSE! THE REAL QUESTION IS, HOW COME YOU'VE GOT SOME LEFT!

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, winegrowers were exposed to the issue of the lifespan of rosé wines early on, particularly because they were the first to export rosé wines across the globe – in other words, they knew when the wine would leave their winery, but not when it would be drunk. They therefore took into consideration the relatively fragile nature of rosé wines with their sometimes fleeting aromas. In particular, they mastered the most challenging technical processes, making huge strides over the past ten years. They now work faster and wherever possible, in an air-free environment so as to minimise contact between the juice and oxygen. The aim is to preserve wine from oxidation and to promote very gradual, very slow development. They have also learnt to vary blends of wines for bottling, incorporating more robust grape varieties such as Syrah, Mourvèdre and Carignan for late-bottled wines.

YOU CAN ONLY DRINK THE LATEST VINTAGE OF ROSÉ



WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because **you can enjoy other vintages too, and not just the latest**. It's true that over time, the colour drifts from bright pink to more of a salmon-pink tinge and aromatic expression gradually displays spicy, empyreumatic, floral or ripe fruit notes in addition to the yellow or white fruit aromas, citrus and tropical fruits. But the wines are not fading, they are broadening their spectrum, in the same way that white wines evolve from their early youth to several months or years' bottle time. The penultimate vintage of a rosé wine is **still gratifying** and continues to display its iconic style but will appeal to inquisitive consumers who keep an open mind when it comes to new profiles. So rosé helps broaden the flavour spectrum and therefore resonates with current consumer trends. This might well turn the spotlight back on rosés with two or three years' bottle age under their belt.

Rosés are not 'flash-in-the-pan' wines. In Provence, winegrowers have gained control over oxygen management, enabling them to craft rosés that fully retain their delicious characters over time.

ROSÉ CAN ONLY BE ENJOYED AS AN APERITIF

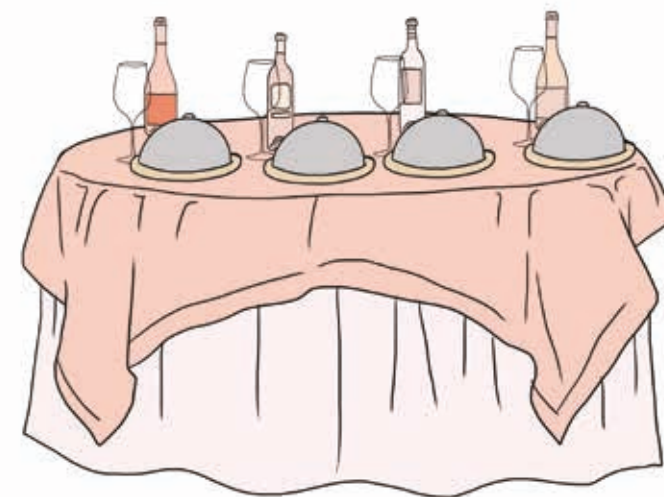


WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because rosé wines are equally suitable for an aperitif as they are for **an entire meal!** Due to their easy-drinking character they have become a go-to wine for casual occasions such as pre-dinner drinks or aperitifs, to be enjoyed alongside canapés, buffets, tapas and sharing platters. These wines' genuine **versatility** means they can be enjoyed with different styles of cuisine, making them perfect for drinking when not everybody is eating the same dish. However, rosé wines' versatility is also an advantage when it comes to the dinner table, where they will pair equally as well with seafood, vegetarian, fish and poultry dishes as they will with cheeses. They also stand up flawlessly to all types of cuisine, from Mediterranean and Oriental to Creole and Asian dishes.

From urban, vegan and flexitarian cuisines to fusion foods, the profile of rosé wines has enabled them to tap into new consumer trends and establish a place at the dinner table.

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, there are no preconceived ideas when it comes to drinking rosé with food, either in restaurants or at home. **AOC Côtes de Provence rosé wines pair with aioli, stuffed vegetables, risotto, pasta with clams or tagine. Those from AOC Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence make good companions for, say, sea-caught fish, either pan-seared or marinated, or soft cheeses. AOC Coteaux Varois en Provence rosés can be served with pistou soup or spicy foods like curry. There is a wide range of possibilities and as rosé consumption becomes less summer-focused and gains currency throughout the year when it meets products from other seasons, the scope continues to broaden.**



- ROSÉ? BUT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DRINK IT WITH?
- I AGREE, THE CHOICE IS ENDLESS...



- GREAT, IT'S WINTER!
- WHY?
- IT'S ONE OF THE FOUR SEASONS FOR DRINKING ROSÉ!

IN THE PROVENCE WINE REGION, people have subconsciously made rosé wine consumption somewhat seasonal. And yet, they also remember that the older generations used to drink it all year round. Nothing is cast in stone – at the forefront of market trends, winegrowers have noticed that consumption is becoming **weather-sensitive. Consumption is dictated less by the season and more by the weather. As soon as the weather is nice, people willingly drink a glass of rosé, even in the winter. It is the go-to drink for al fresco pavement café drinking, in city restaurants and areas that draw in large numbers of holiday makers like ski or seaside resorts.**

ROSÉ IS FOR SUMMER DRINKING ONLY



WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?

Because it is a **cultural construct**, specific to France. It can be easily explained and is related to the invention of tourism in the 19th and 20th centuries, and its subsequent development. The South of France, home to Provence, along with the Alps and Northern Italy, became magnets for the first holidaymakers. Most of them were affluent and often came from Great Britain – they chose to spend the winter under milder climes. But as **tourism went mainstream**, and coincided with a decline in farming activities, the holiday season moved to the summer. Summer is the hottest season and as the French rediscovered rosé during their holidays, they associated it quite naturally with good weather, which highlighted its refreshing flavours, especially when temperatures soared. This idea became entrenched in the national psyche but is not a universal concept. In other countries, where admittedly rosé consumption is higher when the sun shines, it is more evenly distributed throughout the year.

The term now used is 'weather-sensitive' because Provence rosé wines are drunk all year round, as soon as the sun shines.

VINS DE PROVENCE

le Gout du Style



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