

Wine Spectator ONLINE

A Rosé Is a Rosé Is a Rosé. Or Is It?

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It was gray and rainy last Wednesday in New York, yet all was rosé inside Fig & Olive in the Meatpacking District. More than a dozen producers from Provence were pouring their rosés from the 2008 vintage.

I like a good rosé. It's an ideal accompaniment to light, one-dish meals, specifically salads and cold plates, during the warm summer months. The fresh, delicate berry flavors, full body and dry profile seem to harmonize with a wide range of foods, like salade Niçoise, gazpacho, seafood platters and charcuterie.

Among the rosés being poured, I liked the fresh, spicy Côtes de Provence Rosé Whispering Angel from Château d'Esclans (\$19). It's a blend of Grenache, Rolle, Cinsault, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Château de l'Escarelle's Coteaux Varois en Provence Les Belles Bastilles (\$14) offered delicate strawberry and watermelon notes. From Château de Pourcieux there was a round, fruity Côte de Provence (\$10) made mostly from Syrah, with Grenache and Cinsault. The Château de Saint-Martin Côte de Provence Grande Réserve (\$17) was on the austere side, firm and laced with mineral and spice flavors.

The quality of the rosés on offer was consistent. They are made almost exclusively from red grapes, with a short period of skin contact. Thus, they are full flavored for wines that are fresh, delicate and pink.

Yet, there's a move afoot by the European Union to allow rosé wines to be made by blending red and white wines. Currently, this is only allowed in Champagne.

Naturally, the Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Provence (Wines of Provence), the organization representing the regional producers, [is against this proposed legislation](#). So is the French government and apparently, the Italians have joined in opposition too.

"We understand blending is a method to produce wine with pink color. When you blend you have a wine that's 95 percent white and 5 percent red," said François Millo, director of Wines of Provence. "So what you end up with is a white wine."

"We should not confuse the consumer, so we asked the E.U. to say if you make a wine this way [by blending] you don't call it rosé," he continued.

Of course, Millo admitted the Provence contingent was protecting its own interests. But he has a point.

"Rosé comes from skin contact and it's very hard to do. The aromas and flavors come from the skins and in Provence we have some very specific technology to catch the aromas and structure, but not too much color and tannins. We want to make light-colored wines with intense flavors."

Should blending be allowed? If it resulted in less expensive "pink" wines, is it better for the consumer? What do you think?

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