

A VAST KALEIDOSCOPE OF PINK

THE UNDISCOVERED COMPLEXITY
IN ROSÉ WINE

BY KRISTEN BIELER

Perhaps owing to its immense drinkability, rosé doesn't invite the kind of contemplation reserved for the great red and white wines of the world. But just because it's accessible, refreshing and often found pool-side doesn't mean rosé can't be complex.

Until recently, most people (including many wine professionals) believed that all rosé more-or-less tasted the same. With higher quality rosés coming from a growing number of regions throughout the globe—many of which didn't take the category seriously until a few years ago—the wine drinking world is starting to appreciate the vast diversity within the world of pink wine.

"Five years ago, guests would simply ask me for a 'glass of rosé.' Today many ask for a glass of Chinon rosé or Corsican rosé," says Victoria James, sommelier at NYC's Piora restaurant and author of the just-published *Drink Pink: A Celebration of Rosé*, a book she wrote to dispel myths about this complex category. "Rosé is starting to be recognized as a wine, just like red and white. Terroir-driven examples show consumers that pink wine can hold a sense of place, reflective of centuries of tradition."

PROVENCE

The birthplace of rosé and still the benchmark. The Provençal style—pale pink, aromatic-driven, fresh, light-bodied—is what producers around the globe are increasingly emulating. Crafted primarily from Grenache, Cinsault and Mourvedre grapes, Provence rosé typically shows red berry, watermelon and light herb flavors. As the second largest rosé-consuming nation, the U.S. guzzles 43% of Provence's exports (up another 47% last year!).

Yet the floodgates have far from closed, and established category leaders like Château d'Esclans' Whispering Angel and Minuty are joined by first-time entrants this year—many with serious pedigrees. Take Fabre en Provence, the region's largest producer of cru classé rosé and in business for 17 generations; August Wine Group, the brand's importer, reports selling four times what they had forecasted. And plan to double that number next season. America

has become a prime target for both new and established brands. For example, Aimé Roquesante, a \$12.99-SRP Côtes de Provence that has been a best-seller in France, is just now being imported in by Luneau USA in sufficient supply to go national.

Producers are testing the consumer's willingness to trade up, too. The number of bottlings over the \$20 mark is at an all-time high. The organically-farmed Figuière estate has just introduced a new quartet of rosés this year, which includes the Confidentielle Rosé (\$34). Whispering Angel fans can upgrade to Rock Angel (\$35) which sees a bit of oak, as does the Prestige expression (\$24) from Domaine de Cala, a new winery founded by chef Joachim Splichal. Mirabeau, a beloved brand in Ibiza has released their Etoile (\$35), from a high-elevation vineyard site.

Mathilde Chapoutier (yes, daughter of Michel) is on the third vintage of her Mathilde rosé(\$20).

