

CARMEL SELECTED Rosé – a great gift for Valentine's Day, because you have to drink it together. (Carmel Winery)

# ROSES & ROSÉS



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

It is not long until Valentine's Day. Diamonds are a girl's best friend, but what if it is just a regular Valentine's Day and not the grand proposal? That leaves wine, chocolate and roses. These are the standard choices. You can never go wrong.

Or can you? A gift of chocolate in these health-driven days can be less popular than you may think. Your thoughtful gift may provoke a cry of anguish. "Why aren't you helping me lose weight?" could be the response. It was once so easy.

Thank goodness we still have wine and roses. Whereas roses can be red or pink to send an "I love you" message, the romantic color for wine is pink.

A pink wine is described under the broad heading of Rosé. This can cover any wine ranging virtually from the most delicate onion-skin pink to what looks like a bottle of red wine with a glass of water mixed in.

Rosés always used to have a problematic image. They fell between two stools. Neither fish nor fowl. When I first learned about wine I was told "Red with meat, white with fish. If you can't decide, choose rosé. It goes with everything."

On the other hand, some of these wines were massive sellers in the past. The best examples were Mateus Rosé and White Zinfandel.

Mateus was a genius creation. The dumpy, flask-shaped bottle, pink color and slight spritz almost created a category of its own.

White Zinfandel was another brilliant invention

by Sutter Home Winery in California. Using the description "White," the name of the national red variety, the invention of the term "Blush Wine," and serving the wines up with a generous dollop of sweetness were inspired marketing. The wines flew off the shelves in America, and many wine lovers began their journey on White Zin.

Mateus and White Zin were brands, and were not thought of as traditional rosés, of which the best were produced in France. The French have always drunk a great deal of them, and they had a far more serious name for quality. Tavel Rosé from the Southern Rhone, Rosé d'Anjou from the western Loire Valley, and Provence Rosés in their skittle-shaped bottles would most likely have represented rosé on most international wine lists. Provence is the most famous region for rosé.

In Israel we had our own history with rosé. The big selling star in the old days was the Carmel Grenache Rosé. A TV personality once told me his rosé story, giving far too much detail. Apparently, he came of age in an encounter involving a beach, a pretty girl and a bottle of wine. It was like the Rothschild story "the sun was shining, the beach was pretty, the sea was calm, the girl was beautiful... and the wine, I don't remember what it was, but it was the best wine I ever tasted." The difference was that this character remembered even the wine. It was the aforementioned Carmel Rosé! So, it was certainly legendary in his eyes.

My own recollection of this wine was not so positive. I remember it as a rather muddy, diluted, dull red color, lacking fruit, and it was more semi-sweet than semi-dry. Let's put it this way. The quality of this wine did

not do the image of rosé any good, and it most likely contributed to the long time it took for rosé to make a comeback here.

In the late eighties and early nineties, the pioneering Golan Heights Winery restarted the Israel wine industry. Optimistically, they produced two rosés. There was the charmingly named Yarden White Harvest and Golan Cabernet Blanc. When they started making traditional method sparkling wine in the mid-nineties, they produced an excellent Gamla Sparkling Rosé. However, the consumer was still not ready to give pink wines respect, and they were eventually all discontinued.

In the 2000s, the rosé revolution was thought to be nigh. Carmel, for example, jumped from producing one to five rosés in one harvest, in expectation of the new boom. However, the hype of the wine trade chatter was not matched by sales in the marketplace.

At the same time, things were changing around the world. Quality rosé was becoming desirable. Sacha Lichine, son of a very famous father, moved from Bordeaux to Provence and decided to produce a rosé with all the care and attention (and accompanying PR noise) of a great red wine. He launched the most expensive rosé in the world. Then celebrity gate-crashed the rosé thing. Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt produced Miraval Rose. Even after they broke up, the joint venture survived. Lichine and Brangelina made rosé sexy again.

It was only in the last 10 years that rosé took off here. Recanati Winery was the first winery to produce a more expensive rosé. They put it in a fancy bottle and sold it in a prestigious looking gift box. Then some of our leading small wineries like Castel, Flam and Yatir





(FROM LEFT) Imported and Israeli rosés: Binyamina Moshava Rosé Blush; OR\_de la Castinelle CV; AIX Rosé; Conde Valdemar Rosé; Castel Rosé du Castel; Tura Rosé ND; La Foret Blanche Talpiot Rosé; Recanati Rosé. (Photos: Wineries mentioned; Recanati – Omri Meron)

added a rosé to their portfolio that was more expensive than the previous expressions, which were mainly sold in supermarkets. They upgraded Israeli rosé. By this time the public was ready for it, and even wine toffs started to order rosé for the first time.

Rosé is basically made in three different ways.

The most common way is through skin contact and maceration of red wine grapes. The color comes from the skins. The length of the skin contact correlates to the depth of color.

The second way is the Saignée or bleeding method. During the process of making red wine, some of the juice is bled off, which can be used to make a good rosé, and this procedure also contributes to concentrating the red.

The last way is adding a little red wine to a white wine. Most people assume all rosé is made this way, but table wines do not use this method, although producers of sparkling wine do.

For me, rosé is the ultimate mood wine. It is unpretentious, unspoiled and simply the correct choice for so many occasions. Think of lounging on the balcony or patio with family or friends after a long, hot summer's day. Alternatively, imagine sitting in a restaurant in Jaffa or Acre, with colleagues from work. The table is covered with small plates of meze. Or, lying on the beach to enjoy a sunset with the one you love. These scenes would be complete only if you were drinking a glass of chilled rosé. It suits our climate, our food, the relaxed mood here and also the Eastern Mediterranean, Levantine atmosphere. Maybe it is the beautiful color that gives the fragrance of romance.

Rosés cover every price point. Most are dry, some are semi dry, and there are even some that are semi sweet. They can be in a tutti-frutti style, or be more flinty and mineral. What they have in common is the refreshing acidity.

THE MAIN consideration when buying is to decide the style, sweetness and price point. These are more critical to your choice than the grape variety.

Going up the price scale, some of my favorite fruity style rosés are Carmel Selected (great with pizza), Barkan Reserve Gold, Tabor Adama Barbera and Tura. In the more austere style are Bat Shlomo, Recanati, Flam and Castel. Finally, and rarer, are those roses with mouth feel and texture, like Chateau Golan, Shvo and Razieli, which are great food wines. Then there are those rosés made in Israel with French overtones. Among these are the steely Jacques Capsouto Eva,

the fruity La Foret Blanche and the striking presentation of La Citadelle de Diamont. Some rosé aficionados (particularly if they are French!) claim they really know how to make rosé.

If you want to kick it up a notch, of course a sparkling rosé is the ultimate if we are talking about romance in a bottle. The Yarden Brut Rosé is made strictly by the traditional method and is very high quality. You will find it as good as any champagne but less expensive. However, if it's real champagne you want, the Barons de Rothschild Brut Rosé and Drappier Rosé de Saignée (100% Pinot Noir) are excellent and kosher.

I recently tasted rosés at Binyamina Winery with their talented winemaker Yonatan Shotts. They have really entered the rosé business. They have a rosé under their Moshava, Yogev and Reserve labels. Last year they also made a full colored, almost red rosé with a bright red label. Now they are developing a high-end rosé. This is indicative of the new interest in rosé wines.

The range of imported wines in Israel has never been better, and there is no lack of rosés available. Just look around. One of my favorites is Aix from Provence, which is classic, fragrant and fresh. I have just come across Conde Valdemar from Rioja in Spain. It is charming, light pink, fruity and gluggable. Then, for those wanting kosher, there is the Mas de la Source, refreshing with great acidity, and Or de la Castinelle,

crisp with delicate perfumed fruit aromas, both from Provence, and the very pale Les Jamelles, from Languedoc in France.

Serve your rosé cold. Put it in the fridge a good few hours before you need it. If you have a choice, use white wine glass. Rosés go particularly well with meze, cold meats, fish and poultry. I like matching pink with pink, and having rosé with salmon or tuna, in any of their incarnations.

You don't have to understand rosé to drink it, and it is okay to like it just because of its color. The rosé world, though, is broad, fascinating, and there is far more variety to it than most of us appreciate. If you want to find out about Gris de Gris, Oeil de Perdix (eye of the partridge) and so much more, I suggest you read the excellent book *Rosé: Understanding the pink wine revolution*, by Elizabeth Gabay, MW.

So, there you have it. A bunch of roses and a bottle of rosé is a great gift. Why? Because you give the flowers, but the rosé has to be shared. No one wants to drink a wine on their own. Maybe on second thought, a small box of handmade chocolates would make things complete. After all, on Valentine's Day, everyone is entitled to a little guilty pleasure. ■

*The writer is a wine-trade veteran, who has advanced Israeli wine for 35 years. He is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore*



**YARDEN BRUT** Rose. A sparkling rosé made in the traditional method; a classic option. (Golan Heights Winery)