

The perfect summer wine

By NEIL ALLANBY





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When it comes to rosé, most of us in Australia will think of a somewhat sweet, cheap and easy-drinking pink wine typified by Mateus rosé: that Portuguese wine in the narrow-necked flask-shaped bottle that flooded the market in the 1970s and 80s. Well, rosé has certainly moved on since then, changing in style to become the trending wine last summer.

Being as parochial as they are, the French never took to Mateus. They have their own rosé wines. In fact rosé has been made in Provence in the south of France since the Greeks arrived around 600 BC. Production continued with the Romans and, nowadays, the global centre of excellence for rosé is recognised as the Côtes de Provence appellation.

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Rosé wines certainly are experiencing a boom. Rosé sales in France have tripled in the last decade. In 2015 wines sales in France were 50 per cent red, 33 per cent rosé and only 17 per cent white. The style is dry and spicy/savoury with a light salmon blush colour, and the wines are often sold in a

distinctive skittle bottle. Rosé should be drunk when young—generally in the year after bottling—and served chilled. In the south of France it is perfectly *de rigueur* to add an ice cube to your glass of rosé to keep it cool.

In Provence, rosé is generally made from the red grape varieties cinsault or grenache. The grapes are macerated for a short time—six to 12 hours—ensuring only a little colour from the skin is extracted. The skins are then removed and fermentation continues to dryness (when all the natural grape sugars are consumed by fermenting yeasts) as per the method for making white wine. This results in a light-coloured, fruit-flavoured, dry, refreshing and savoury rosé. >>



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Rosé is a wine for outdoor summer enjoyment. Think lunch on the patio under the shade of plane trees, the wine matching perfectly with *charcuterie*, tomato and mozzarella salad, stuffed zucchini flowers, grilled red snapper and barbecued food—so very typical of summertime in Provence. When in Provence, keep an eye out for Domaines Ott rosé, from the Mediterranean coast near Hyères between Toulon and St Tropez.

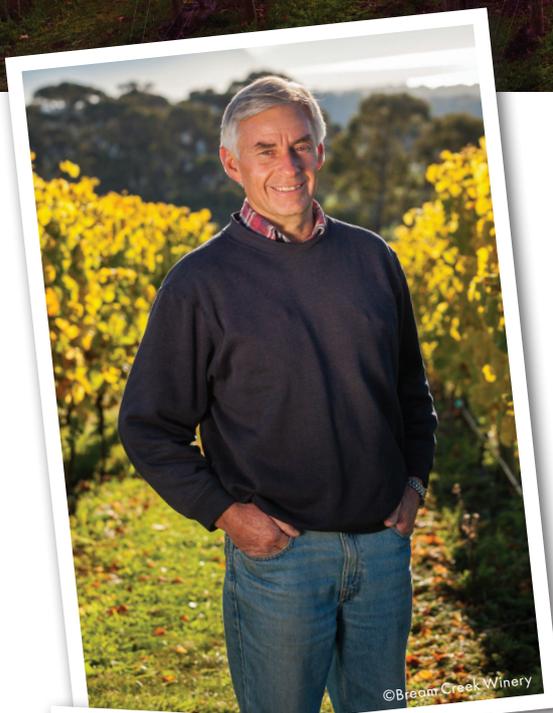
Also in Provence is the little town of Entrecasteaux, the family home of French explorer Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. In the late 1700s and early 1800s the French made major expeditions around the south of Australia and Tasmania in particular. The first such expedition to Tasmania was led by Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne in 1772; he anchored his ships in what is now Marion Bay. He went ashore and interacted with the Tasmanian Aboriginals, the first European credited to have done so. Abel Tasman himself did not set foot on Tasmania—the weather was too rough and he sent his carpenter to swim ashore to plant their flag. Bruni d'Entrecasteaux visited in 1793 and Nicolas Baudin charted the coast in 1801, three years before the English did under Matthew Flinders. The results formed part of the famous Freycinet map of the

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entire coast of Australia, which was drawn by Baudin's navigator Louis de Freycinet and subsequently published in 1811. The main issue that prevented Tasmania becoming French seems to be the fact that the French Revolution was underway at this same period and no head of state was in place long enough to claim the country. Certainly the French have left their mark in Tasmania with such place names as Marion Bay, Bruny Island and Freycinet.

Overlooking Marion Bay is one of Tasmania's premium vineyards, Bream Creek Vineyard, which has been owned since 1990 by Tasmanian wine pioneer Fred Peacock. This vineyard has a particular personal interest for me as it is planted on what was Allanby land—my father's cousin sold his farm to the original vineyard owners in 1973. There is still an Allanby Street in nearby Copping—not the most glamorous street but it's my family name nevertheless.

I met up with Fred earlier this year at the Taste of Tasmania Food



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and Wine Festival in Hobart. I was very interested to try his rosé and to determine how it stacked up against the Provençal-style rosé, and also to see whether the Provençal influence had extended to rosé wine and lifestyles in Tasmania.

Tasmania is well known as a premium region for pinot noir grapes so Fred selects pinot noir grapes from mainly younger vines for his rosé, particularly grapes which are more fruit forward rather than those with a more robust or firmer structure. “Pinot noir is our variety of choice as it has such amazing fruit flavours varying from raspberry and strawberry to cherry depending on the season,” says Fred. Tasmanian pinot is a small berry grape, leading to a high skin-to-pulp ratio. As the flavours are in the skin, Tasmanian pinot is well suited for rosé. The cooler climate ensures the acidity is maintained and not burnt off by the hot sun. Acidity leads to a refreshing finish on the wine. All grapes are handpicked, crushed and then cold soaked for a few hours. The exact length of time is an educated guess based on tasting and past experience. The skins are separated and fermentation continues at a cool temperature, around 13 to 15°C, for around four weeks—for comparison, red wines are often fermented at around 30°C over two weeks. After bottling, Bream Creek Vineyard

Pinot Rosé is released as a young current-season wine. Provençal rosé is made in a similar way.

The alternative way to make rosé is the *saignée* method, which is to bleed off 10 to 15 per cent of the juice from the bottom of a ferment after a few hours and continue its fermentation without skins. This generally gives a stronger coloured and flavoured rosé, different in style to Provençal rosé. This method has the additional advantage of concentrating the flavours of the remaining red wine in the fermentation vessel that is still on skins. Fred used to make his rosé using this method but has changed in order to ensure his rosé is more delicate, less structured and a lighter salmon blush colour. This better reflects the lighter, more interesting and versatile nature of the best rosés on the market today.

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A big advantage of Provençal-style rosé is that it is quite accessible; there is no need to be a wine snob to fully appreciate this wine. It provides instant gratification to the 25-to-35-year-old target market, which is not so much concerned about learning

grape varieties and wine regions, cellaring wine for years, or feeling inadequate about wine knowledge in front of friends and colleagues. “Rosé may not be everyone’s first thought when selecting a wine, but once suggested it seems now to be generally accepted and satisfying to all,” notes Fred. “Our sales are definitely moving in the market. Rosé is quite adaptable with food and great for outdoor entertaining. Young folk are discovering that wine is not all about sauvignon blanc and full-bodied reds, and are particularly trying to match their wines to the occasion and the general food style of the moment.”

How does it taste? The Bream Creek Vineyard website describes this wine as Tasmania’s take on Provençal rosé. I totally agree! The wine is a light salmon blush colour, with flavours of strawberries and cranberries. It is dry, savoury, mouth filling and textural with a clean refreshing finish. It is the ideal accompaniment for a wide range of foods in summer and it is the perfect match for grilled Tasmanian salmon. “On a hot day at a casual lunch I still notice many consumers toting massive shirazes, merlots and cabernets,” remarks Fred. “On such occasions, give me a glass of rosé!”

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