

think pink

PHOTOGRAPH BY BORTOLI WINES

WHEN SHAKESPEARE PENNED THE LINE “A ROSE BY any other name would smell as sweet”, he was referencing the flower but his words could apply equally to rose wine. The Bard was implying that the names of things don't affect what they really are and rose is a wine style that conforms to this idea.

Mention rose and the characteristics it conjures up are at odds with 'real' wine. As it is typically drunk within a year of being produced, rose doesn't transport you back to the year your child was born or the year of your marriage. Its traditions are thousands of years old but it is essentially invisible within the idea of modern wine criticism, analysis or deconstruction.

Rose veers away from the need to explain variety, vintage and region, and rejects some of the definitions of wine's greatness, which is the ability to be liquid geography or history. Rose exists as a greedy, joyous moment of consumption; it is a wine that honours being alive, not wealth or prestige.

It is also a softer drinking experience. The tradition of rose is delicate and round in the mouth, creating a three-dimensional texture. Roundness comes as the acidity is lower, making the texture silky, almost syrupy, with no hard edges of acid or tannin.

Within a European and Middle Eastern context, rose is the wine of the ancients. In European history, the market for strong, oak matured, age-worthy red wines that we know today is really only a few hundred years old. Before the mid-1700s, rose was the standard. The latest research suggests that the wines, red and white, of antiquity were fermented on their skins. In the case of red grapes, fermentation was overnight, not long enough to make the dark red wines we know today. This 'drink now' culture was influenced by wine's role as a safe liquid because water was full of diseases such as cholera and dysentery.

Fast forward to the first half of the 20th century and rose shared the stage with red varietals as the most popular wines in many parts of Europe. The biggest market was for roses and light red wines that were drunk within one year, affordable and low in status. It was not until the rise of refrigeration that white wines took off and became as dominant as they are today.

After a lull in the second half of last century, brought on by the rise in popularity of white wine, rose has returned to the fore and is one of the fastest growing trends in modern wine. But while more drinkers are embracing rose, it remains a perplexing wine in the public consciousness.

My view is that rose's colour plays a part in its unconventional narrative. Pink challenges the traditional idea of wine and food

as a pairing because the colour is so flexible. But rose can be paired with a broad range of cuisines. Pink is about subtlety, stylishness and versatility.

Pink has also been swept up in recent tides of history. Sociologists say that people have learnt to enjoy wearing pink in the last 100 years. For my young niece, Lucia, the desire is overwhelming – she wears as many as five different pinks on a day to the beach: pink shoes, socks, shorts and shirt, and a pink necklace.

Pink carries a modern revolutionary meaning, having become the hue of gay culture. Yet pink is also classical; the colour of tradition in premier wine cultures such as France.

Old wine drinking countries never abandoned rose and now new world countries like Australia and the US are learning to love it. Recent sales trends are impressive. Thirty per cent of wine sales in France are for rose followed by 18 per cent in Holland, 16 per cent in the UK and 13 per cent in the US.

Australian wine drinkers should consider Shakespeare's advice. We need to hear the name rose and not let our preconceptions make us forget that this delicate drop is, in its own way, as credible as any other wine choice, and more flexible. **HL**

WHERE TO FIND IT

Rose hot spots include Tasmania, which produces sparkling rose from pinot noir; pinot noir based roses from the Yarra such as De Bortoli Yarra Valley and La Boheme Act Two; and rose made from merlot in the Yarra, Orange, Mudgee and the Hunter Valley. In the Adelaide Hills, Italian varieties make good rose, such as Longview's Nebbiolo Rosato 2014, and grenache does a huge job in the Barossa, such as Angove Nine Vines, Charles Melton Rose of Virginia, and Zontes Footsteps Scarlett Ladybird from Langhorne Creek.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Colour is the best test; if it looks like fairy floss, then that is what you drink it with. If it looks salmon pink to orange, food will be its friend. The taste is watermelon and pomegranate fruits with the body of red wine in terms of smooth, low acid, and round texture, and the freshness of a white wine's light clean finish. Not just as an aperitif, but suitable with Chinese, Japanese, barbecues and rich seafood such as bisque and bouillabaisse.

top drops



Pirie 2009 Traditional Method Sparkling Rose (\$48; 94 points)

Aromas of complex strawberry, fresh raspberry and a nice line of subtle oak create a ripe heirloom tomato thread within. Seamless silky ripe fruits with a very pretty lift of wild fruits of the forest in the mid palate and a staircase of complexity in the lingering red to black fruit flavours.



De Bortoli 2014 La Boheme Act Two Pinot Noir Rose (\$22; 91 points)

Strawberry and gentle herbal tea pitch savoury fruits into the nose. The multi stage palate has soft acids on the fresh strawberry middle palate and wild herbs on the finish. A fresh buoyant length of flavour thanks to the fine acid that is less sweet than previous vintages.



Longview 2014 Boat Shed Rosato Nebbiolo (\$19.90; 95 points)

Top Rose at the 2015 Sydney Wine Show. A wonderful smoked salmon colour, showing delicious pomegranate and raspberry aromas. This is a pale dry rose with a lovely silky texture, middle palate weight and very good length, finishing with pomegranate and watermelon flavours.



Bendooley Saignee Merlot Rose 2014 (\$20; 90 points)

This pale dry(ish) rose is salmon colour, and has watermelon juice and raspberry aromas. The flavours are juicy ripe pomegranate, mulberry and raspberry in the middle palate with a savoury clip in the acidity to finish. A crowd-pleasing style for casual entertaining.



Mountadam 2012 Barossa Shiraz (\$18; 97 points)

An outstanding modern savoury shiraz with blackberry, smoked meats and white peppery aromas. Elegant medium bodied with red berry fruits, unfolding into a skyscraper of intense juicy red cherry, raspberry and redcurrant generosity. Intense fruit and spice on the finish.



Seppelt 2013 Jaluka Chardonnay (\$26.90; 95 points)

Exemplary stylish modern chardonnay with excellent fruit depth. The winemaker wraps delicious stone fruit flavours with a long cool acidity, making a creamy package with balance and refinement that never loses flavour focus. Another great value 2013 chardonnay.

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