

Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences

The Weekly Wine Commentary

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Putting the Dry in Rosé

Rosé is my wine of choice on the hottest days. As it is in Seattle and St. Louis.

So says a wine maker who travels around the country doing sales calls, and he notes that the pink wines that are selling are dry.

I see it also in certain wine shops in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and I have been told by wine makers around the country that rosé sales out of their tasting rooms have reached significant proportions.

Moreover, even though scanner data show pink wine sales rising fast, the numbers don't reflect restaurant rosé as well as tasting room and wine club (shipped wine) sales.

But two problems exist here and they are pernicious. One is that a lot of rosé remains rather sweet, and many are also aged in wood and/or put through malolactic fermentations that scavenge fruit.

Secondly, some people harvest the fruit so late that the alcohols are in the 15% range, which leaves the wine with a sweet finish --- and I know few wine makers willing to keep the proper acid/pH so the wine tastes a bit on the dry side.

Rosé is usually at its best when it is fresh and fruity with little or no sugar. As a young wine, and even when made from early harvested fruit, rosé usually delivers fruit that is akin to berries citrus, watermelon and honeydew melon.

At a blind-tasting of 12 dry rosés last night, 10 of the top wine makers in Sonoma County (as tasters in all, including me) found some delightful efforts.

The key aspect of the best wines was their lack of residual sugar --- or that what trace sugars we found were perfectly balanced by acidity.

My top wine, made from the rare Grignolino grape, is a Heitz specialty and a perfect wine for those who love dry rosé. Worth ordering by the case and sipping throughout the summer: 707-963-3542. A case may not be enough!



Exceptional

2007 **Heitz** Grignolino Rosé, Napa Valley (\$18): Spectacular color and aroma of raspberry and tangerine with traces of ginger, honeysuckle and almost a plumeria note. Totally dry and tart, perfect for matching with a wide variety of foods. Annually a classic pink wine. Group rank: 3rd place.

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