

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

October 2017

## CLASS D: ROSÉ

Presented by Lawrence Matthews (Nanaimo Chapter)

### AFTER READING THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- What are three different methods for making rosé wines and which one is considered least acceptable;
- What are rosé wines called in Spain; what are they called in Italy;
- What is a Tavel wine?
- What grapes are used in making a Tavel wine?
- What foods are paired with rosé wines?

### BCAWA DEFINITION OF CLASS D - ROSÉ WINES

Light, refreshing pink wines. In grape rosé wines, varietal characteristic is a definite plus. Strongly aromatic wines such as raspberry are generally unsuitable for use as table wines.

#### Technical Characteristics:

Ingredients:	Red and black grapes with colourless juice are most successful, but blends of red and white wines are permitted.
Alcohol:	9% - 12%
Colour:	Pink: pale to deep. An orange tinge is permissible. Red or purple are undesirable. Amber is unacceptable.
Sugar:	0% - 1.5%
Specific Gravity:	0.990 - 0.998
Acid:	6.0 g/L - 7.5 g/L
pH:	3.1 - 3.7

### INTRODUCTION:

Rosé wines are made from a wide variety of grapes and can be found all around the globe. Rosé wines are known as *rosada* in Spain and Portugal and *rosata* in Italy and *blush* in California.

These pink wines have quite a large following and no more so than in the Provence region of France and the Loire Valley. One has to only look to Portugal and the ubiquitous Mateus Rosé, which for some years was the largest wine export.

Many people consider rosé to be unsophisticated, and not for serious wine drinkers. It is all too often associated with slightly sweet wines lacking in flavour and made for easy drinking.

Do you remember Californian White Zinfandel? It started as a fad in North America in 1972 when Sutter Home Winery had a stuck fermentation. They bottled it and called the pink coloured wine "White Zinfandel". The wine is generally low alcohol and sweet. But looking on the positive side, it has introduced a lot of North Americans to drinking wine.

Many people are still reluctant to try rosé. Perhaps it is because, their first experience of rosé wine was drinking Mateus rosé in the days when this wine was produced in a sweeter style than it is today.

In fact some of the rosés of southern France and Spain are very complex wines and far removed from the light styles often encountered in Portugal.

Rosé is the wine of choice in hot climates where an alternative to red is required. In France, the best wines are found in the south. Good examples are found in the appellations contrôlées of Cotes de Provence, Bandol, Cassis, Palette, Coteaux d' Aix en Provence, Tavel and Cotes du Rhône. Tavel, an appellation contrôlée, which is located to the west of Chateauneuf du Pape, produces some very good wines, mainly from grenache with the addition of some cinsault. Tavel can be rather alcoholic and the appellation stipulates a maximum alcohol level of 13.5%. It is best drunk young as it is prone to oxidation.

It is interesting to see the rise in popularity of rosé wines. France now produces more rosés than white wines. With this comes an expectation from the consumers. Carefully crafted rosés are to be found in almost every liquor store.

Another interesting fact is that rosé is probably the oldest wine type, having its roots in ancient Greece. To make a palatable rosé takes little time compared with red wine which need time to mature and soften, during which time it could easily spoil. In the middle ages, the pale Claret from Bordeaux was gaining popularity in England. It was a rosé, not the full-bodied red wine, which we associate with today's Claret.

The BCAWA guidelines say the alcohol content is to be 9% - 12% but most rosés today are above that reading and it is not uncommon to find 14%ABV from many producers. This represents a change in how we look at rosés. The light summer BBQ, refreshing rosé is still the market some producers are targeting but the fuller bodied, higher alcohol rosés are quickly gaining popularity. This is axiomatic, judging by the amount of available high alcohol rosés in today's market place.

## **HOW IT IS MADE:**

Briefly, there are three ways to make rosé –

### **Maceration:**

A common method being early pressing of red grape varieties after a very short period, usually 12–24 hours, of skin-contact (maceration). During maceration, phenolics such as the anthocyanins and tannins that contribute to color as well as many flavor components are leached from the skins, seeds and any stems left in contact with the must. In addition to adding color and flavor, these phenolics also serve as antioxidants, protecting the wine from degradation of oxygen exposure. While red wines will often have maceration last several days to even several weeks, the very limited maceration of rosés means that these wines will have less stable color, potential flavor components and oxygen protection. This contributes to wines with shorter shelf-life that are meant to be consumed soon after release.

The must is then pressed, and the skins are discarded rather than left in contact throughout fermentation (as with red wine making). The longer that the skins are left in contact with the juice, the more intense the color of the final wine.

### **Saignée:**

When a winemaker desires to impart more tannin and color to a red wine, some of the pink juice from the must can be removed at an early stage in what is known as the *Saignée* (from French bleeding) method. The red wine remaining in the vats is intensified as a result of the bleeding, because the volume of juice in the must is reduced, and the must involved in the maceration becomes more concentrated. The pink juice that is removed can be fermented separately to produce rosé.

**Blending:**

In other parts of the world, blending, the simple mixing of red wine to a white to impart color, is uncommon. This method is discouraged in most wine growing regions, especially in France, where it is forbidden by law, except for Champagne. Even in Champagne, several high-end producers do not use this method but rather the saignée method.

**GRAPES USED:**

Any red grape varietal can be used, but examples of some grapes used commercially are:

- Shiraz grapes are used in Australia
- Malbec grapes are used in Argentina
- Pinot Noir grapes are used in Burgundy, France
- Grenache grapes are used in Navarra, Spain
- Marchel Foch and other varietals are used locally
- Grenache and Cinsault used in Tavel, France (the only rosé AOC in France) This region of France is restricted as to what grapes they can use.

**COLOUR:**

Depending on winemaking techniques, this skin contact will give the wine a range in colour from pale salmon pink to a dark pink. Amber coloured rosé is unacceptable as this normally denotes oxidisation.

The colour also depends on the type of grape used. Pinot Noir makes a pale to medium pink wine while Grenache tends to make pale to orange coloured wine.

Making rosé from white grapes, for example Pinot Gris, is not the norm but one local vineyard in the Cowichan Valley, produces a pink Pinot Gris. Apparently this style of Pinot Gris is gaining a following in the east of Canada.

**FOOD PAIRING:**

Food pairing depends on the style of rosé wine to be consumed. There are rosé wines that are lighter and sweeter, considered by many to be "patio wines". Other rosé wines are made to be more food-friendly (i.e. Tavel rosé wines), which can be paired with charcuterie, seafood, shellfish, grilled pork and vegetable dishes. While rosé wines can be served with almost anything, you should avoid pairing them with cream sauce or raw oysters.

**SUMMARY:**

Today's rosé wines have evolved from the cheap Mateus or Anjou rosés that were available 50 years ago. We now have many quality rosé wines from which to choose.