

## COLUMN



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writes persuasively about the growing trend towards rosé wine in India and abroad

# The Enduring Power of Pink

One summer, several years ago while on holiday in Europe, I wandered into one of the largest supermarkets in Paris in search of a wine for the evening.

I was stopped in my tracks by a splendid wall of pink bottles – a floor-to-ceiling display of rosé wines. It was a mesmerising sight. As far as the eye could see was every shade of pink on display from onion-skin orange to pale, barely-tinted Provencal blush. Prettily curved flutes-a-corsets jostled for space alongside elliptical bockbeutels and slender high-shouldered beauties. Cheeky, eye-catching labels made this an aisle most wine lovers would enjoy browsing. Here was a clear signal: summer is here, and it is time to drink pink.

More recently, I was reminded of rosé's universal appeal and sheer approachability when I opened a bottle of rosé from France's AOP Luberon the other day. Named La Douceur de Juliette, it was a delicious *vin de soif* or thirst quencher wine, loaded with fresh berry fruit and a zing of acidity, made expressly for warm summer evenings. The bottle emptied faster than you could say, *oeil de perdrix*.

Five years ago, the naysayers predicted that the growing proclivity for pink was not going to last. Rosé was just a passing fad that would be gone in the blink of an eye. It was a wine that was not serious, just pretty. Today, a few years later, they have to eat (or drink) their words.

Not only does the wall of pink continue to dominate summer wine store displays, but the trend has spread to every other part of the world. Even India, initially slow to adopt rosés, has joined the band of pink enthusiasts.

France, of course, continues to lead the charge of rosé quaffers, consuming 35% of rosé wine produced by volume. In fact, 'Rosé Wines World Tracking' by the Provence Wine Council revealed that in 2019 one in 10 bottles of wine consumed was rosé, but in France it was one in every three bottles. While no other country beats French rosé consumption or production, countries like Austria, New Zealand, Hungary, Romania are among the latest to jump on to the rosé movement with their production jumping over 50% in the last decade.

In the US, where trends often rule, a report by global market research firm for alcohol beverages, 'bw166' shows US rosé sales volume increased by an astounding 1,433% from 2010 to 2020. This growth was led primarily by France and California rosés, although Italy, Washington and Oregon rosés were also significant contributors. Of course, many US rosé consumers prefer the electric neon-pink sweet 'white zinfandel' but there is a growing shift towards dry, pale rosés à la Provence.

What is more, the average price of rosé sold around the world continues to climb and is up

29% since 2015. In July 2022, IWSR Drinks Market analyst, Daniel Mettyear mentioned to me, "We expect that the rosé category on the whole is premiumising, driven by the emerging trend towards luxury and lifestyle brands."

He was spot on. Wine trends are well worth deconstructing, so I set off to delve into the surging popularity of pink wine. What is not to like about rosé, asks Sula Vineyards' chief winemaker Karan Vasani, my first stop. "Wine drinkers are waking up to the versatility of the category. A wine with fresh acidity and a burst of fresh fruit flavours cannot help but win over wine lovers."

Added to that India's tropical climate and the diversity of cuisines to match wine with, and rosé ticks every box. Sula's The Source is the top-selling premium rosé available, combining Provence's favourite rosé grape, Grenache with the direct press method which gives the pale pink colour the world loves. As we speak, it continues to notch up medals at international wine competitions and flies off the shelves at Sula's Tasting Room.

"It is a serious wine, albeit it has its own occasions. It is so versatile; it is the easiest glass to reach for," notes Vasani. The only disadvantage, if it can be called that, is that rosés are best drunk within a couple of years of production to enjoy their fresh flavours, acknowledges Vasani. So, unlike its red and white siblings, rosé is not regarded as age-worthy. However, he believes the category will continue to grow rapidly. I also agree with rosé expert Elizabeth Gabay MW's view that Instagram has played a major role in driving the popularity of rosé. It taps into the universal yearning for an all-star luxurious lifestyle, with the French Riviera and film stars lounging by five-star poolsides. All you need do to verify this is log on to social media and count the rose hashtags: #Yeswayrose #roseoclock #roseallday. I could go on.

Another prime indicator that the rosé revolution is here to stay is to count the number



of movie stars and music icons who now have a rosé to their name. The celebrity rosé trend was kicked-off by the business-savvy Brad Pitt with his Château Miraval in 2013. The wine reportedly sold out in a mere five hours on the day of its release. Pitt was quickly joined on the rosé bandwagon by Jon Bon Jovi (Hampton Water), John Legend (LVE), Post Malone (Maison No 9), Sting (Il Palagio), Cameron Diaz (Aveline), Sarah Jessica Parker (Invivo) and Kylie Minogue (Kylie). If rosé was not a money spinner it is highly unlikely that big names would spend any time or effort on it.

Importer Vishal Kadakia of Wine Park who has nine rosés in his import portfolio has a different take on its popularity. The surge happened during the pandemic when wine consumers premiumised and were trying out new categories, he believes. "I believe women have driven the sales of rosé in India, especially during the lockdown." But rosé is far less popular than whites and especially red wines in the Indian market. India is only 55th in world rosé consumption by volume, reports IWSR, but the premium rosé category is gradually and inexorably growing. "Provence rosés are very expensive in India, close to Rs 5,000 at the premium end, and those prices are a deterrent to buyers. Rosés from other regions are far more affordable and therefore, much more popular," Kadakia says.

However, whichever way you look at it, rosé is here to stay.

Rosé wines come in many guises and are gaining rapidly in popularity

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