

Reds, whites and pinks - a chilling question

3 Jun 2006 by JR

For wine professionals "red or white?" is one of the most difficult questions in the world. We want to know "which red and which white are they exactly? I'll try both, thank you". But as the fashion for rosé continues unabated and temperatures rise (global warming presumably means I don't have to add the rider "in the northern hemisphere"), today's wine choices are much more complex than this.

There is something terribly compelling about rosé on a summer's day. It has the same effect visually as the pop of a champagne cork has aurally: a Pavlovian desire to follow suit. Walking to what turned out to be a delicious Sunday lunch recently on a typically grey London day we saw a couple sitting on a wisteria-garlanded balcony sipping an unspecified rosé with their Sunday papers. Mmm yes, I thought, I'd like a glass too. The Ch de Beaucastel 1994 red Châteauneuf-du-Pape we were served instead was at a particularly beautiful stage in its evolution but still, there was that slightly unsatisfied desire for pink. It's no wonder that restaurants are fiendishly looking out for toothsome rosés. The more are opened, the greater must be demand.

But of course pink wine comes in many different styles, even if not quite as many styles as reds and whites do because rosé is so rarely made as a 'serious' wine destined to be aged – in fact almost all should be drunk as young as possible. I have divided the pink wines I have so far come across to recommend for drinking this summer into three groups: pretty and delicate (of which Bandol provides some of the finest); pink Pinot Noirs; and dark, substantial wines that are halfway between a rosé and a red, a style the Spanish call clarete. See below for my favourites in each category.

But there is an entirely different category of wine which is technically red but which is particularly well suited to hot weather because the wines taste so good chilled. Many red wine drinkers find that even in high summer, an unrelieved diet of white or pink wine palls after a while. And while far more red wine in my experience is served too warm than too cool (I frequently ask wine waiters to put my bottle of red wine in the fridge for a while), there are not that many styles of red that can take much chilling. It is not generally a good idea to serve classic red bordeaux too cool for instance. Because it is relatively high in acid and tannin, the chewy preservative that comes from grape skins, and both of these are accentuated at lower temperatures, chilling claret has the effect of making it taste even tougher and tarter. Nor is it generally a good idea to chill very full bodied wines too fiercely. They tend to give up their aroma only grudgingly even at room temperature; served cool they can too easily taste of nothing more than alcohol.

Reds that are aromatic and relatively lightweight (usefully impotent, one might call them) respond well to being served cool, however. The classic chillable reds are Beaujolais, based on the fruity Gamay grape, and red Loire, based on the beautifully scented Cabernet Franc grape. Some of the most suitable reds for serving chilled however are made from the Burgundy grape Pinot Noir which is naturally relatively low in tannin. Australia's enterprising winemakers seem to have jumped resoundingly on to this particular bandwagon but similar wines are also emerging from cooler parts of South America such as Chile's Pacific-cooled Leyda and some of the higher vineyards in the Andean foothills in Argentina. And there are many particularly fruity styles of red burgundy itself that can be wonderfully refreshing and satisfying if served cooler than most red wines usually are.

Here are my favourites in each category but you can find notes on a total of about 50 recommended pink and chillable red wines in [tasting notes](#).

PRETTY PINKS

Cavalchina 2005 Charetto Bardolino £5.99 (£4.79 if two bottles of rosé are bought) Majestic
Very pale tomato colour – lovely and delicate, just 12 per cent alcohol.

Rosé de Tourelles 2005 £10-11 Bibendum, Handford Wines of London W11, Wines of the World in Earlsfield
Lovely round and superior, Dry and fresh. Very sophisticated. Much drier than most pink bordeaux.

Rimauesq 2005 Côtes de Provence £10.99 Philglas & Swiggot
Very fine, dry and properly Mediterranean-scented. Made from the Tibouren grape of Provence.

PINK PINOTS

Dom de la Tour Bajole, Cuvée Marie Anne 2003 Bourgogne Rosé £6.97 Irma Fingal Rock of Monmouth
Very unusual – bone dry and interesting. Drink up though.

Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir Rosé 2004 £8.99 Wine Press of Carlisle
Delicate and dry, not too old, but bags of personality.

Pierre Cherrier 2005 Sancerre Rosé £9.50 Stone Vine & Sun of Twyford
Very delicate with a particularly satin-smooth texture.

CLARETE STYLE

Dom du Grand Arc 2005 Corbières Rosé £6.50 Stone Vine & Sun
Full, mineral and quite rich - almost more like a light red.

Martius Rosat 2005 Montsant £6.65 Bibendum, Polygon Wines of Southampton
Big, bold food wine; almost a chillable red. Deep flavoured Garnacha with one-third Syrah.

Valle Reale, Cerasuolo Vigne Nuove 2005 Montepulciano d'Abruzzo £6.95 Ten-Acre Wines of London NW2
A big, deeply satisfying mouthful of fresh rosy, rhubarby fruit from south eastern Italy. 13%. Strongly recommended.

Redoma Rosé 2004 Douro £8.99 Philglas & Swiggot
Grumpy port grapes. Portugal could make more rosé of more interest than Mateus.

BEAUJOLAIS

Dom de Boischamp 2005 Juliéna £6.99 (£5.99 if two bottles are bought) Majestic
Great lift and freshness – bright orange label from Pierre Dupond, Villefranche.

Ch de Raousset 2004 Chiroubles £8.99 Oddbins
Solid but silky. Fully ripe and tingly. Gold medal in Paris.

Cave de Fleurie 2005 Fleurie £9 Bibendum
Lovely crackling-fresh perfume. Not too tough.

CHILLABLE RED PINOT

Secano Estate Pinot Noir 2005 Leyda, Chile £6.99 Marks & Spencer
Fresh crisp fruit – good pure flavours with quite a bit of acid.

Scotchmans Hill, Swan Bay Pinot Noir 2004 Geelong £7.99 Oddbins
Screw-capped light Victorian. Marked acidity. Almost a deep rosé. The grand vin is much tougher, and £4 more expensive.

Australian College of Wine Pinot Noir 2002 Yarra Valley £9 Boutique Wine Company
Slightly sweet and ready to gulp. A previous wine of the week.

Gachot Monot 2002 Côtes de Nuits Villages £10.96 Irma Fingal Rock
Gentle, comfortable, quite pure.

CHILLABLE CABERNET FRANC

Vignerons de Saumur 2005 Saumur £4.99 (£4.49 if two bottles are bought) Majestic
Stonking direct freshness – slightly inky, but good ink! Full of fruit too.

Ch de Putille 2005 Anjou Rouge £5.95 Stone Vine & Sun
From Pascal Delaunay and only 12 per cent. Round, refreshing and persistent.

Joguet, Les Petites Roches 2003 Chinon £8.25 Waitrose
Surprisingly fragile – very, very dry but exceptionally refreshing.

Ch de Hureau 2004 Saumur Champigny £9.20 Haynes Hanson & Clark, also Justerini & Brooks

Lovely glossy fruit.

Mabileau, Rouillères 2003 St Nicolas de Bourgeuil £9.99 Ann et Vin of Newark, Bentleys of Ludlow, Duncan Murray of Market Harborough
Fragrant and fresh but with a pretty dry finish.