



# Think *pink* this summer

Rosés are in, and they can be just the refreshing, dry wine you're looking for at this time of year

I am a red drinker. I've been one most of my life.

I dabbled for a bit in fruit, semi-sweet and whites in my youth but red is the thing that I crave the most at night and with a meal. Give me a Cab or a Zin with steak or ribs, a silky Merlot to sip on or a Gamay to while away the afternoon and I am a happy man. My cellar is 90 per cent red, so I have no doubt about my orientation and predilection, but summer comes along and, well, my palate suddenly starts leaning a little paler.

It's at this time of year I start collecting the wines for what we refer to as the "summer wine boxes." These are two or three boxes (24 to 36 bottles) of wine for when friends come over to sit on the deck or when we have a beautiful sunny afternoon we'd like to sit outside and enjoy with drinks in our hands.



Michael  
Pinkus

Years ago, these boxes contained a few Sauvignon Blancs, some Riesling, Gamay and BBQ Reds but, these days, the BBQ Reds are gone and the Gamay stays in the cellar. In their place, you'll find the same Sauvignon Blancs, a few Riesling, some unoaked Chardonnay, a smattering of Pinot Gris and a whole lot of rosé!

Before you turn the page of this magazine thinking, "Rosé is too sweet, I'm outta here," give me a chance to state a few things upfront: I hear you. I feel your pain. I have felt the sting on my teeth and the syrupy

sweetness on my tongue from an overly sweet rosé, but there is good news. Rosé has redeveloped itself back into a serious wine — I swear.

It is true that pink wines have developed a bad reputation over the last few decades, and no one is more responsible for it than the Americans and their White Zinfandel fascination. We here in Canada like to blame many things on our neighbours to the south, but the U.S. did bring us White Zinfandel in the '70s and, because Zinfandel is a high-alcohol red when fermented close to dry, if you try to back off the alcohol, you are left with residual sugar. That's how Sutter Home, of California, brought White Zinfandel into the market (by accident in 1975, but brought it they did and kept it coming).

Today, if White Zinfandel were introduced,

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we'd probably put it in the "coolers" section of the liquor store. Its sweet, candied aromas and flavours lend themselves more to a Wildberry cooler than proper wine or even rosé, but because it happened to be grandfathered into the wine section, there it sits and there it stays.

Now, I'm no fan of White Zinfandel. I love the monster red versions California puts out from the likes of Cline, Ravenswood, Carol Shelton and even the 7 Deadly guys, Micheal David. They are a perfect pairing for ribs and other barbecued fare, but White Zinfandel has no place around my patio. I'm a real rosé fan, and you should be too — and I'm talking proper rosé, not the sweet stuff.

Usually, when I start talking about my love for rosé wine, I am often labelled as a "girlie-man" for liking "the pink stuff," but I brush that kind of criticism off. Real men like pink wine. There, I said it, loud and proud.

As previously hinted at, rosé is shucking off its negative reputation and is becoming cool, if you know what to look for. First off, real rosé, as made popular by the French in Provence, is all about dry, good acidity, food-friendly wines that leave the sugars in the rearview, red fruits and berries up front and on the nose with a refreshing dry finish.

This style of rosé is also beginning to permeate into other wine-making countries such as Chile, Argentina, Spain, Italy and, best of all, right here at home. Wineries here are using Cabernets, both Franc and Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir to make some fruit-forward yet still dry rosés that smell like Jolly Rancher watermelon candy yet end with mouth-puckering lemon and lime-soaked strawberries. The key word here is dry. That's the sign of a serious rosé — the willingness to go dry and not leave the mouth sticky and sweet. That's what ice wine, late harvest and port wines are for. Dessert is dessert. Pink should be for refreshment on a summer's afternoon and it should leave you craving more, not wondering why you ever started drinking in the first place.

When I started those summer wine boxes, they also had a few white wines in them,

## These are perennial favourites that seem to find their way into my summer wine collections:

Cono Sur Viognier (Chile) — LCBO  
Peninsula Ridge Cabernet Rosé (Ontario) — LCBO and winery  
Fielding Rosé (Ontario) — LCBO and winery  
Creekside Cabernet Rosé (Ontario) — LCBO, usually, and winery  
Château des Charmes Cuvée d'Andrée Rosé (Ontario) — LCBO, usually, and winery  
Featherstone Sauvignon Blanc (Ontario) — LCBO and winery  
Kacaba Pinot Gris (Ontario) — Winery

### And some new favourites ...

Inniskillin Unoaked Chardonnay (Ontario) — LCBO and winery  
Fielding Unoaked Chardonnay (Ontario) — LCBO and winery  
Marisco King's Desire Rosé (New Zealand) — LCBO  
Saint Aix Rosé (France) — LCBO  
Two Sisters Rosé (Ontario) — Winery  
Viña Esmeralda Rosé (Spain) — LCBO

mainly the unoaked kind, the ones with lots of apple, peach, pear, lemon, lime and other citrus notes — wines that are fresh and lively and pair with summertime fare (salads, fresh fish, nibbles on the patio) or are pleasant sippers all by their lonesome. Don't be afraid to stock up on these wines, get a few empty boxes in your cellar and begin filling them with wines to have on hand, those "gotta gets" for summer.

Why should you keep running out to the store each time someone is expected to drop by, when you can stock up in advance? Don't be the one on the block who constantly says, "If I knew you were coming over, I would have picked something up."

My only other piece of advice is to make sure to have these wines finished by the end of the year so you can begin anew next year. The pleasure of these wines is in their freshness, not their longevity. 

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