

rosé



# In the pink.

Get set to don your rosé-coloured glasses once again this summer. Australian rosé is bigger and better than ever.

by Sarah Gamboni



5  
to try



**2016 De Bortoli  
La Bohème Act  
Two Dry Pinot Noir  
Rosé, \$20**

A seriously drinkable wine with serious winemaking pedigree. Steve Webber's salmon-pink rosé promises delicate strawberry aromas and a dry, textural palate courtesy of MLF and gentle lees stirring.

**If there's a wine that captures** the essence of summer, it's rosé. Over the past decade, Australian winemakers have embraced the dry, pale styles of Europe, eschewing fuchsia-coloured fruit-bombs in favour of sophisticated, savoury wines. No longer an afterthought or a by-product of red winemaking, today's rosé is a serious drink in its own right. And as we enter the festive season, local winemakers are gearing up for their biggest rosé season yet.

### Riding a wave of rosé

A recent report by Wine Australia revealed that rosé is the fastest-growing wine style in Australia, up 25 per cent over the past five years. The evolution of the wine's style, coupled with some savvy marketing, has seen rosé become synonymous with summer. The Rosé Revolution initiative, which was spearheaded by Leanne De Bortoli and a band of like-minded wineries a few years back, has brought rosé to a new breed of drinkers.

"When I started contacting other wineries, I was blown away by how many had started to dabble in rosé," Leanne says. "It was like its time had come, but it needed something to galvanise it. I think that's where Rosé Revolution really hit the mark"

Tasting events and social media introduced dry rosé to a generation of 20- and 30-somethings who hadn't been scarred by Mateus in their youth. And over the course of a few summers, rosé's image as a sweet, frivolous wine was kicked to the curb. A similar scene unfolded in the US, where social media created a perfect storm of pink wine. The hashtags #brosé and #yeswayrosé drove demand for rosé to the point where the Hamptons famously ran dry of the wine in the summer of 2015.

While there's no need to stockpile cases of rosé just yet, Australia's best producers do tend to sell out each season. And therein lies rosés real appeal: it's a wine to drink now, not cellar for later. By late February or March, when the Barossa Valley's Turkey Flat sells out of its small run of rosé, our minds are already beginning to turn to more full-bodied autumn wines.

### Pale and interesting

One of the pioneers of rosé in Australia, Turkey Flat has been making the pink stuff since 1994. Fans of their grenache-based rosé will have witnessed a striking change during that time, from vivid magenta to the pale, guava-toned versions of recent vintages. So why mess with a winning formula? Owner Christie Schulz says it's not just the colour that has been tweaked. "The palate has changed over the past five or six years - it's become much drier these days, and that's in response to what drinkers want,"

she says. "There's much more maturity in the market and those pale Provençal rosés are seen as the benchmark."

The wines of Provence were also the starting point for Steve Webber and Leanne De Bortoli when they launched their inaugural La Boheme Dry Pinot Noir Rosé six years ago. "When we first started with La Boheme, there were mainly the darker, sweeter styles of rosés on the market," Leanne says. "Steve and I had spent time in the South of France, drinking these beautiful, pale, dry rosés when the weather was lovely, thinking 'Gosh, that's what we should be drinking in Australia!'"

Today, De Bortoli produces a range of rosés showcasing different varieties and Victorian regions. There's the Bella Riva Sangiovese Rosé out of the King Valley, a Heathcote grenache rosé, and the La Boheme and Vinoque Nebbiolo Rosé from the Yarra Valley. "Out of all the rosés we make, the nebbiolo is probably my favourite," Leanne says. "It's around \$25 for a really serious wine, without having to take it too seriously."

Scottish-born Michael Jappy, a buyer at distributor Cellarhand and ex-head sommelier at Stokehouse, agrees that Australian rosé has come of age. "As winemakers have taken a more considered approach to its production, it's no longer just a by-product - it's a quality wine in its own right," Michael says. "It's fun to drink, but it's pretty bloody tasty too."

### Match point

Michael also highlights rosé's ability to pair with summer dishes as a major key to its success. "One of the biggest appeals of the drier style is that it suits a broad range of foods," says Michael. "Rosé is right in the sweet spot for summer picnics and barbecues, and it fits in with Australia's outdoors lifestyle and fancy-free culture."

For those pale, dry rosés, take your queue from the Mediterranean when menu-planning over the coming season. Classic pairings include antipasti, cured salmon, *pissaladiere* (Provençal onion and olive tart) and seafood dishes, such as bouillabaisse. Those versions with a hint of sweetness and upfront aromatics lend themselves to spicy Thai dishes and Spanish fare, such as garlicky grilled prawns.

And - in the spirit of not taking things too seriously - don't be afraid to add an ice cube or two to chill down your rosé. "Steve thinks I'm a pleb because sometimes when it's really hot, I've been known to stick an ice cube in a glass of pinot noir," Leanne admits. "I don't get too precious about it as there's nothing worse than drinking warm rosé." ●



#### 2016 Turkey Flat Rosé, \$20

Predominately grenache, with a whisper of cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and mataro, Turkey Flat's signature rosé from the Barossa Valley is drier and paler than ever before. Summer peaches and strawberries are tempered by gentle spice and a clean, crisp palate.



#### 2015 S.C. Pannell Arido Rosé, \$25

Blending pinot noir, shiraz and perfumed pinot meunier, Steve Pannell's Arido Rosé boasts bright cherries, red fruits and rose petals on the nose, which give way to a clean, dry finish.



#### 2016 Schmolzer & Brown Pret-a-Rosé, \$27

From Beechworth husband-and-wife team Jeremy Schmolzer and Tessa Brown comes the fourth release of their bone-dry Pret-a-Rosé, a blend of cool-climate pinot noir and sangiovese.



#### 2015 Usher Tinkler Nose to Tail Rosé, \$25

The darkest of the bunch, Usher Tinkler's rose-gold rosé is a blend of Hunter Valley shiraz and merlot, delivering floral perfume on the nose and a savoury, supple palate. Perfect with salumi.