

Roses are Red but Rosés are for Valentine's Day



This Valentine's Day, there is no better wine to celebrate new love with – or the love you already share with someone - than with a bottle of bubbly. But not just any sparkling wine. For the day named in honor of a young Roman priest, Valentine of Rome, who was martyred for secretly performing wedding ceremonies during a ban in AD 269, one should choose a special wine that adds color as well as style for this year's day of love. Sparkling rosé wines are just what Cupid ordered.

Rosé wines are not a specific varietal, but rather they are a style of wine that generally ranges in color from soft pink to light purple, depending on which grapes are used and the winemaking technique employed. Traditional red wines get their color from lengthy contact between the juice and the red grape skins. One of the most popular methods for making rosé is Saignée - literally "bleeding" – where the grape juices are bled away from the skins soon after the grapes are crushed. The longer that the skins are left in contact with the juice, the darker the wine will become.

Many different wine grapes lend themselves to rosé production. The most popular is pinot noir, but I have enjoyed sparkling rosé wines made from varietals including grenache, syrah, sangiovese and even malbec. The qualities I look for in a rosé wine are fresh red fruits flavors, (running along the lines of strawberry and raspberry), crispness and abundant acidity.

And just like the ubiquitous nature of love, sparkling rosé wines can be found in just about every wine grape growing in the world. Best of all, many sparkling rosés are a relative bargain and can be found in plentiful supply.

One of the best values for a vintage Cave rosé is the **2010 Canals Canals Cava Brut Nature Rosat (Rosé) Reserva from Spain**. Made from roughly equal parts Monastrell and Garnatxa (red grape varietals indigenous to the region) and aged for more than 24 months in the bottle, it sports beautiful scents of wild red berries and cherry on the nose. Fresh, clean strawberry and cherry flavors are light and bright in the mouth, with just a touch of ginger on the crisp, clean finish. **\$13**

The Veneto region of Italy is best known for their Prosecco wines, but it is also home to the **Non-Vintage Riondo Pink Prosecco Raboso Spago Argento**. Made from the Raboso grape, the wine displays vibrant scents of floral notes, such as rose petals and violets on the nose. Flavors of raspberries and red strawberries are supported by a slightly citrusy frame. It is an ideal choice to enjoy with chocolate covered strawberries and other chocolate-centric desserts. **\$13**

If you want a domestic sparkler to enhance romance, try the **Non-Vintage J Vineyards Brut Rose** from the Russian River Valley appellation in Sonoma, CA. The cool climate of Russian River Valley is ideal for growing the chardonnay and pinot noir grapes used in this lively rosé. Pretty red fruit aromas of summer raspberries and cherries are prevalent on the bouquet. On the palate, the wine opens with flavors of tangerine, red plum, and raspberry. The bright, delightfully fresh acidity on the finish makes it an excellent companion to smoked salmon canapés. are repeated on the equally fruit-driven palate, ending with notes of brioche on the balanced finish. **\$30**

For a special treat, pop open a bottle of **NV Jean Laurent Rose**, an authentic Champagne from the Cote des Bar region in France. The nose is wonderfully fruity, featuring strawberry and dark cherry notes. The mouthfeel is elegant and refined, where finely tuned bubbles carry flavors of cherry, raspberry and grenadine over the entire palate. While mouthfeel is slightly creamy in texture, the finish is crisp, dry and refreshing. This wine is versatile enough to enjoy with sushi, pizza or fruit tart. **\$50**