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THE CAP

A screw cap is great on any wine that is best drunk young, like rosé. There's no risk of a corked bottle (a defect that can cause a moldy aroma). Bonus: no need to bring a corkscrew to the picnic.

THE YEAR

Few rosés are meant to be aged. Younger rosés tend to be bright and lively, while older ones may taste flat and dull. Look for rosés with a vintage from the previous year.

TO SERVE

Chill a rosé for about an hour in the refrigerator before serving. It should be cool—refreshing enough to enjoy on even the hottest days.

THE LABEL

The best-known rosé wines come from a few regions in the South of France renowned for dedicated rosé production, specifically Provence and Languedoc. But you can also find great options from Spain (notably Navarra and Rioja), Italy, South Africa, and California.

the decoder rosé wine

When it comes to choosing the best drink for almost any summer night (and menu), think pink.

THE COLOR

Rosés can range from the palest pink blush to a vivid near red. Quality wines can be found in any part of this spectrum.

ALCOHOL CONTENT

Rosés usually fall in the 12 to 14 percent range (similar to white wines), although sweeter rosés tend to have less alcohol.

2013 Chapoutier Belleruche rosé, \$15

Juicy grapefruit, ripe berry flavor, and a rich mouthfeel.





ROSÉ WINE 101

What is rosé?

Rosé is a dry wine that is “brighter and more refreshing than many red wines and shares some characteristics with white wine,” says Napa Valley winemaker Jeff Morgan, the author of *Rosé: A Guide to the World’s Most Versatile Wine*. Rosés are typically made in one of two ways. A winemaker presses red grapes (anything from Cabernet Sauvignon to Grenache, many of the same grapes that you’re used to seeing in your favorite red wines) right after harvest, yielding a pale rosé color. Or the winemaker crushes the grapes, letting them sit in contact with the skins before separating the pink juice from the skins. Some rosés are made by simply blending white wine with red wine, although these are rarely of high quality. “The best rosés are produced in wine regions where rosé is a signature wine, not an afterthought,” says Steven Kolpan, a professor and the chair of wine studies at the Culinary Institute of America, in Hyde Park, New York.

What should a rosé look and taste like?

A rosé’s color does not directly correlate with its taste. “Darker rosés may have more body than paler rosés, which could be appealing to those who prefer red wines,” says Doug Bell, the Atlanta-based global beverage buyer for Whole Foods Market. “But often paler blush wines have surprisingly complex aromas and flavors that can linger long after you’ve taken a sip.” In both styles, sweetness varies. Some bottles are bone-dry, while others have a slightly sweet finish.



party! Go to realsimple.com/partyplanning for tips and tricks for throwing the ultimate summer bash.

What foods should I pair a rosé with?

Rosés are some of the most versatile wines, thanks to their bright acidity and lack of tannins (the mouth-drying flavor compounds found in red wines). One big factor to consider is whether the wine is sweet or not. Dry rosés often work best with lighter dishes, like fish, grilled chicken and vegetables, charcuterie, and salads. Some find that dry rosés struggle to compete with heavier fare, like roasts and rich sauces. Sweeter rosés work with a wider range of foods. “Sweetness helps to put out the fire in spicy food, de-emphasize the saltiness in salty foods, and balance smoky flavors,” says Kolpan, which means that these rosés are great paired with barbecue. One thing that most experts agree on: Rosés don’t play as well with desserts. Sweet foods can highlight the alcohol in the wine and make it taste bitter or flat.

How do you know if a rosé is sweet or dry? And what about bubbles?

Sweetness is revealed only by tasting or by asking the salesperson. And some rosés, even nonsparkling ones, may have a bit of effervescence, thanks to carbon dioxide that is trapped from the fermentation process. “That bit of bubble can compensate for a lack of acidity, making the wine more refreshing and your mouth water, so you crave another sip,” says Kolpan.

How much should it cost?

The most important question of all may not be how much to spend on a bottle but rather how many bottles to buy. Sure, there are some notable (and notably expensive) bottles, but the spirit of rosé is predominantly the opposite: young, fun, lighthearted—and about \$10 to \$20 a bottle.



2013 Mulderbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé, \$12

Jammy flavor and refreshing tartness.



2013 Estandon Côte de Provence rosé, \$14

Bright raspberry aroma, lively acidity, and a smooth finish.



2013 Château d'Esclans Whispering Angel rosé, \$22

Elegant, complex, and floral.



2013 Charles and Charles rosé, \$12

Ripe strawberry flavor and gentle sweetness.