

September Rosés That Sing Into Fall

Lana Bortolot : : 9/29/2024



The color range of leaves looks a lot like the color range of wine.

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September may signal the turn of the seasons, but not a turn of heart (at least, not mine!) when it comes to drinking rosé. As readers of this column know, I have been a steadfast supporter of drinking the pink-hued wines well beyond the summer months and beyond the traditional borders. The fall months, in particular, offer opportunities to try different styles that go deeper in fruit and structure and pair well with dishes that either transition from summer to fall or straddle both seasons. California rosés, many made from Pinot Noir grapes, do that particularly well, as they carry over a darker fruit and earthy profile. Here are a few to try.



California rosés that welcome fall

Producers

Bouchaine, Vin Gris of Pinot Noir 2023, Carneros, Napa Valley. This comes in a tall, slender bottle as part of the winery's estate selection series. Salmon pink, this is a tropical-fruit-inflected rosé carried by melon, silky guava and juicy watermelon. The finish is a little earthy, reminding you of its Pinot roots. Vin Gris, meaning “gray wine” is a variant of the rosé style and uses a very short maceration to keep the color light. Good match with spicy Asian foods.

Calera Vin Gris of Pinot Noir 2022, Central Coast. An offspring of the Duckhorn portfolio this is a cranberry-colored wine with zesty, but not off-putting acidity. Young red fruits, well made and balanced—very serviceable for a number of occasions and dishes.

Cuvaison Rosé of Pinot Noir 2023, Carneros Napa Valley. Sweet baby strawberries lend a perception of sweetness, but from natural fruit sugars. Very aromatic, dry and soft style of wine. Red currants and a citric twist give this a tangy lift. Nice match with burrata, sopped up with crunchy bread.

Decoy Rosé 2023, California. This non-appellation wine has southern French roots with its blend of 62% Syrah, 15% Carignan, 12% Vermentino and 11% Grenache. It's tropical toned, with sweet tangerine and honeydew and heady white florals sharing the stage with small red fruits like wild strawberries and currants.

Domaine Carneros “Avant Garde” Rosé of Pinot Noir 2023, Carneros, Napa Valley. Here’s another first from a winery known as a cool-climate sparkling pioneer—a rosé made entirely from the winery’s new micro-grid-powered sustainable facility, launched this year. This is a lip-smacking sip marked by deeper southern-clime citrus fruits such and blood orange or Spanish clementines. Dry, structured almost like a light red, it’s a good partner to smoked shrimp on couscous with almonds and dried cranberries. Not to be too specific, but that’s how I enjoyed it on a rainy September evening.

Eleven Eleven Rosé of Syrah 2023 Bennett Valley, Sonoma. An earthy, dusty nose leads into the strawberry and tart raspberry fruit tones. Linear, nicely structured with a deeper fruit profile with just a touch of iodine that keeps it interesting. This is a fun, convivial lifestyle wine from an urban winery near downtown Napa.



Lucky Seven! California rosés that work well past Labor Day

Producers

Frank Family Vineyards “Leslie” Rosé of Pinot Noir 2023, Carneros, Napa Valley. Ever been to a farmer’s market in late summer and the farmer says “this is the last week for [fill in fruit]”? That’s what this wine tastes like: the last gasps of juicy summer fruit—here, it’s peaches and plush raspberries with a ripple of tangerine. There’s some heft to this wine, so you’ll want to pair this with transitional dishes such as roasted or grilled poultry or sausage, a roasted root vegetable salad with crunchy kale.

Inman Family “Endless Crush” Rosé of Pinot Noir, OGV Estate 2023, Russian River Valley. This is the 20th anniversary for this rosé from a woman-owned and operated estate. It is so named for the

occasion of the winemaker's 20th wedding anniversary: this was created as a gift to celebrate her "endless crush" on her husband (also, file under "romantic wines to give on Valentine's Day"). This one is dry, driven by raspberries and strawberries with more concentration than a simple quaff and enough structure to stand up to something like Chicken Tandoori, Keema (Lamb) or other Indian mainstays.

Lang & Reed Rosé 2023 Napa. This Cabernet Franc specialist presents its first foray into rosé in 20 years. This one is from grapes cultivated in the Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard, a cool southwestern corner of the valley that's been the mainstay of Cab Franc plantings for 17 years. The color of wild-caught salmon, this is a robust interpretation of a CF rosé, a with strawberry preserve profile playing alongside savory herbs. There's also a rhubarb vibe going on here (bring on the pie!). At 14.2% abv, you'll want to have something substantial with this—a good match with garlic-roasted shrimp and pasta or a goat cheese and tomato tart.

Materra, Cunat Family Vineyards, Yoshino 2023, Napa Valley. From a relatively new winery established in the Oak Knoll District in 2014, this medium-hued rosé comes in a pretty bottle with a Japanese-inspired label reflecting the heritage of the winemaker. Named for Japan's Yoshino Mountain, famed for its cherry blossoms, this is fresh, delicate—a whisper of a wine, considering the power of Malbec, its lead grape (with 6% Grenache). At 13.%, the alcohol is deceptively higher than what the wine conveys. This is a nice start to a wine still to find its audience.

Saracina 2023, Mendocino County. Made from Grenache grapes, this is made from 25-year-old vines from the Teak vineyard, an old-vine block adjacent to the Russian River. Mid-summer strawberries sing in this wine, accompanied by a splash of pink grapefruit. Very fresh, zesty acidity, easy to wash down with soft cheeses, charcuterie or a burrata with roasted beets.

Simon Family Estate Tigress Rosé of Grenache 2023, Napa Valley. Pink grapefruit and cranberry jump out of the glass of this tart, fresh and simple sip. A bit of an earthy, stinky note on the finish. Easy to pair with appetizers or drink on its own.

Sonoma-Cutrer Rosé of Pinot Noir 2023, Russian River Valley. A well-made, inclusive and democratic rosé, this should run for political office (everyone likes!) and be served at large gatherings where you're not quite sure of your guest's tastes (everyone will like!). This shows small citrus fruits—tangerine or Clementine—cranberry and raspberry, watermelon and a touch of lychee gives it a slightly exotic touch.