

DRY ROSÉ REVIEWS: Is it summertime yet?

Summertime... and the sippin' is easy. No wine goes with warm weather like a bright, fruity glass of chilled Rosé.

Rosés -- in various hues of pink and orange -- are riding a surge of popularity after two decades in the wilderness, following a consumer backlash against blush wines like the unfortunately-named White Zinfandel. Sales flew up 22% in 2008, while overall wine consumption rose just 5%.

The assortment of Michigan Rosé is also growing, the overwhelming majority made from Cabernet Franc or Pinot Noir grapes.

For these reviews, MichWine's tasting panel sampled 11 different Michigan Rosés. Some were clearly better than others, but we could enjoy a glass of any of them on a hot summer day. Part of the attraction: a variety of styles and sweetness make it easy to find one you like, or to accompany the food you plan to serve.

Our top three wines perfectly illustrate the point. They begin with two grapes from three different growing regions, and represent three completely different styles of wine.

The top-scoring wine, 2008 Forty-Five North Pinot Noir Rosé (90 points), is noticeably off-dry, bursting with bright fruit flavors set against a stiff acid backbone. Right behind (89 points) are 2008 Tabor Hill Cabernet Franc Rosé, bone dry and food-friendly, and 2008 2 Lads Cabernet Franc Rosé, slightly off-dry, nearly red in color and deep in flavor.

{xtypo_alert}IN THE PINK: REVIEWS OF TEN ROSÉS

REVIEW NOTES by Chris Kassel and the MichWine Tasters

ROSÉ ADORES FOOD -- AND THE FEELING IS MUTUAL!

by Master Sommelier Claudia Tyagi

FAQ about MichWine's review procedures and tasting panel{/xtypo_alert}

We noticed one oddity. Although they use the same grape varieties, several southern winemakers bestow a proprietary name on their dry Rosé: Cabaret or Riviera or Sassy. Northern winemakers seem to stick to the varietal name: Cabernet Franc or Pinot Noir.

Rosé lets a winemaker hedge against the vagaries of Michigan's climate, which offers an opportunity to make first-class red wine from grapes like Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir in some years, but good rosé nearly every vintage.

Long, warm summer? Great year for red. Cooler summer, less ripe grapes? Let's think about making Rosé.

Michigan winemakers can get another advantage when they make Rosé. By "bleeding off" some juice destined for Rosé from the red grape skins before the color and tannins are fully extracted -- a technique called saignée -- winemakers can leave the skins in the remaining juice that's destined for red wine. The resulting red wine, with a higher proportion of skin to juice, can pick up a deeper color and more substance from less concentrated grapes.

For more on the techniques and types of Rosé around the globe, take a look at this [article](#) from the LA Times.

As always, we suggest you read Chris Kassel's reviews and Claudia Tyagi's food pairing suggestions, not just look at the scores. That's especially the case with wine like Rosé, whose style varies so greatly from one winery to the next.

Also tasted, but not reviewed:

2008 Chateau Chantal Pinot Noir Rosé (not for commercial release)