

La vie EN ROSE

Ah, the advent of summer! As the terraces fill up and we start clinking glasses under a glistening sun, chances are it's a well-chilled rosé that's heralding in the new season. Rosé is synonymous with fine weather, light-hearted conversation and Provence – a land of abundance that has inspired and attracted epicures, bon vivants and, yes, seasoned wine drinkers. Though rosé's reputation is sometimes shadowed by its frivolous summer image, Provence certainly boasts rose-tinted tipples that are deserving of a little more credit.

The vineyards of Provence cover 26,680 hectares and are spread out over the departments Bouches-du-Rhône, Var and Alpes-Maritimes. Provence is the largest rosé producer in France, with more than 90% of the capacity devoted to the blushing wines (though there are great reds and whites to be had). During the last three decades, production of rosé (which ranges in colour from pale pink to bright, rosy salmon) has tripled, and the wine has become more popular than ever. Provence's blends are capturing the hearts of many wine lovers, who agree that it isn't only a drink for the warmer months. There are plenty of gastronomic rosés to be had, too.

One of them is Château la Tour de l'Évêque's Pétale de Rose, an (organic) wine with a blush as delicate as its name and a finesse worthy of fine dining. The story of this regional trailblazer – which impresses from the first succulent sip – goes back to 1985 when third-generation winemaker Régine Sumeire had the ingenious idea to vinify her Grenache grapes by pressing the whole bunches using a hydraulic Coquard press traditionally used in Champagne (a nifty trick passed down from Jean-Bernard Delmas of Château Haut-Brion in Pessac). The result was not only Provence's first pale-pink rosé (before that, the region's rosés edged towards more bold pink hues), but with the change in colour came a

notable change in style. Gone were the days when only rustic rosés filled our glass. The results were nothing short of revolutionary: a wine with an incredible length and a toothsome sapidity. This baby was ready to stand up next to the big boys!

The 2022 vintage (a blend of 39% Cinsault, 37% Grenache, 8% Syrah, 6,5% Mourvèdre, 5% Rolle, 2,5% Sémillon, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Ugni Blanc) opens with a whisper of floral notes, ripe aromas of sun-drenched wild strawberries and stone fruits. The bouquet evolves with citrus zest, anise and a hint of peppery spice. On the palate, the sip is as elegant and complex as it is endless. There's a lively acidity harmoniously balanced by a silky-smooth texture. So, what to serve, you ask? Allow me to suggest a *tarte fine* of grilled summer vegetables, crowned with a little rocket and drizzled with a fine olive oil. A velvety pea and courgette flan with thyme, served with a smoky roasted celeriac cream. Or why not opt for a truly ambrosial pairing? A classic French *tartelette aux fraises* kissed with a hint of pink pepper!

Available at vinvinwines.nl



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