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David Williams's wines of the week

Wine

David Williams

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Drink pink: the best rosé wines for summer

The current trend for pink wine is for pale and interesting, but there's more to the style than just wines from Provence



▲ Sales of rosé have grown by 30% globally. Photograph: Getty Images

Mirabeau Classic Rosé, Côtes de Provence, France 2018 (£11.99 - £8.99 from 17 July-13 August, Waitrose) Natural wine may be the most talked-about trend in wine in the past years. But when it comes to hard sales data, perhaps the most remarkable transformation has been the switch to pink. Sales of rosé have grown by 30% globally in the 2010s, during which time the French started drinking more rosé than white, and the British became besotted with a specific French style. Provence is the place that really pushed pastel prettiness into the glasses of previous rosé-sceptics (such as your correspondent). And it remains the rose-gold standard, even as the wines command something of a premium. Offers abound at the height of rosé season, such as Waitrose's promo on the textbook gentle berry and just-out-the-box freshness of English-run producer Mirabeau.

Rosé des Plages Premium, Pays d'Herault, France 2018 (£11.99, Mr & Mrs Fine Wine; Eynsham Cellars) Apart from the wine, one of the factors that makes Provence rosé stand out is the producers' artful way with packaging, which ranges from discreetly elegant (pricey, lovely cult-favourite *Whispering Angel*) to steadfastly retro-trad (textured, flavoursome *Clos Cibonne*) to the perfume counter at Boots (American-owned *Digression*). Winemakers further west along in the Languedoc have taken this on board, with their increasingly proficient Provence-style rosés with an eye on *Vogue* or Instagram rather than a trade magazine. See for example the swish, curvy lines that house the fragrant succulence of *Le Bijou de Sophie Valrose, Cabrières, Languedoc 2018* (£8.99, *Waitrose*) or the Parisian perfumer's bottle for the wash of cherry-berry and melon in *Rosé des Plages*.

Cune Rosado, Rioja, Spain 2018 (from £8.99, Flagship Wines) It's not just the south of France that has been drawing inspiration from the Provence playbook. Pale and interesting is the default mode for rosé producers everywhere now, even if it's mostly the colour rather than the flavour that's altered. In some cases, such as Rioja, that has meant changing the rules to allow winemakers to produce wines of much less intense colour than in the past. Even if some of the region's best rosados (*Ramón Bilbao Lalomba Rosado 2017*, £23.50, *Great Western Wine*, springs to mind) are already at the lighter end of the spectrum, I hope the vividly pink style, in Rioja and elsewhere, doesn't disappear completely, since a wine such as *Cune Rosado* is a perfect punchy match for barbecues, fitting so well, too, with that 'red wine for when it's too hot for red wine' brief.

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