

Mainely Wine News

06/23/09

Everything's coming up rosés

Pink wines for summer days

Category: MAINELY WINE NEWS:

Posted by: Bob Rossi

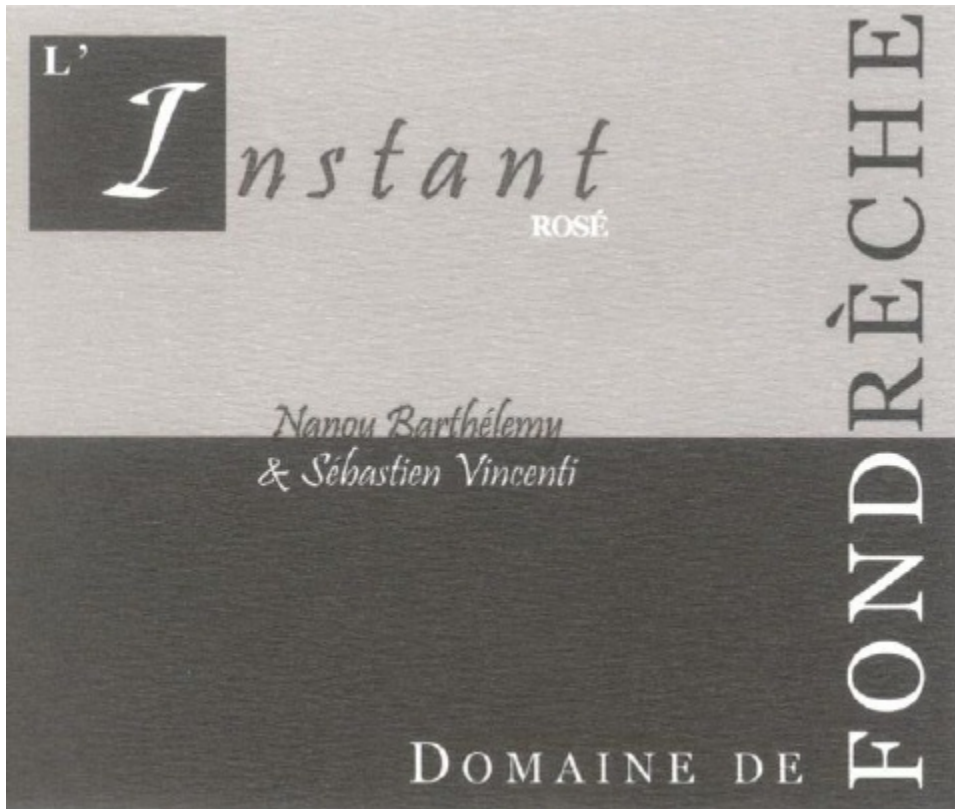
It seems like Maine has had more than its share of cool, rainy days this month, but the calendar says it's summer, and that means rosé season is upon us. It wasn't that many years ago that rosé meant White Zinfandel, or some other overly sweet concoction, to most wine drinkers. However, rosé consumption, long a staple in France, Spain, and Italy, has increased significantly in the United States in the last several years, as has the number of different rosé imported into the country.

As in the past several years, the new vintage of rosés started to arrive on the shelves of Maine wine shops in early April, and the selection has grown as summer has approached. In fact, it seems that every visit to the nearby Rosemont Market reveals a newly-arrived rosé. Most of the 2008 rosés that I've seen here have been from familiar producers whose rosés have been available in Maine for several years, but some new faces have also made an appearance.

One of the newest rosés to arrive is a rarity here: a southern French rosé in a 3 liter box, the equivalent of 4 bottles. This rosé, which is distributed by Devenish Wines, is a 2008 Vin de Pays de la Principauté d'Orange from the notable Rhone producer Roger Perrin, and is a blend of Grenache and Syrah. I've seen this wine at RSVP in Portland and the Rosemont Market in Yarmouth, and it retails for around \$25, the equivalent of less than \$7 per bottle. While boxed wines have been available in the United States for years, they have had an image problem, often stemming from the low quality of the wine inside. In France, quality boxed wines, usually called BIB for "Bag in Box" due to the "bag" or bladder inside that contains the wine, have a strong following, with many top-notch producers selling BIB wines in 5- and 10-liter sizes.

The following are some of the 2008 rosés that I've tried this spring and can recommend. The first group is from the Rhone Valley area of France, which is a source of terrific rosés, most of them selling for very reasonable prices.

The **Domaine de Gournier rosé**, imported by **Bobby Kacher**, has been a perennial favorite of mine, and is a big seller in Maine. The estate is located not far from the environs of Nimes, but is just outside any official Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) region, and is therefore entitled to use only a Vin de Pays designation, in this case Vin de Pays de Cévennes. As always, it is a blend of a number of grapes, including Merlot, Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre. A vibrant, fruity rosé, it sells for around \$10 and is widely available.



The **Domaine de Fondrèche L'Instant**, another great rosé from **Bobby Kacher**, is from the Cotes du Ventoux appellation in the Rhone region, and is made from an almost equal blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Cinsault. In contrast to the bright red color and intense fruitiness of the Gournier, the Fondrèche has a beautiful pink color and a drier finish. It sells for around \$15, and is widely available at shops in Maine, including the Rosemont Market and RSVP in Portland.

Another excellent rosé imported by **Kacher** is **the Domaine de la Petite Cassagne** from the Costières de Nimes appellation, which retails for around \$11. Another perennial favorite of mine, I first tasted the 2008 version of this rosé in March at the domaine, a visit that I wrote about last month ("Wines from the Costières De Nimes Imported by Bobby Kacher"). Like the

Fondrèche, [the Petite Cassagne rosé](#) is a blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Cinsault grapes, but it is much darker in color and more intensely fruity than the Fondrèche.

Another fixture in Maine for the past few years is the La Ferme St. Pierre rosé, from the Cotes du Ventoux appellation. The 2008 version has a beautiful pink color and a refreshing fruitiness, and, like the boxed wine mentioned above, is distributed by Devenish Wines. This rosé sells for around \$14, and, like almost every rosé mentioned here, is widely available.

One French rosé that is new to Maine is the 2008 "Cape Bleue" Coteaux d'Aix en Provence from the ubiquitous winemaker Jean-Luc Colombo. Imported by [Palm Bay Imports](#) and retailing for around \$12, this wine is a blend of Syrah, Mourvedre and Counoise grapes. It is a dark pink, delicately fragrant rosé that could be sipped by itself on a hot summer day, or would pair well with light appetizers.

Another Provençal rosé, which was one of the first 2008's to arrive in Maine, is from Mas de la Dame, an organic producer in the appellation of Les Baux de Provence. This very fruity, food-friendly rosé is a blend of Grenache (50%), Syrah (30%), and Cinsault (20%), and the above-mentioned Jean-Luc Colombo is the consulting winemaker. Also imported by Palm Bay, this wine retails for around \$15, and is widely available.

A newly-arrived 2008 French rosé from outside the Rhone area is Cuvée de Peña, from the same producer that has been providing a great value bottled and boxed red here for several years. Like the red, the Cuvée de Peña rosé is a Vin de Pays des Cotes Catalanes. A blend of Grenache (60%) and Syrah (40%), this is a rich, fragrant, full-bodied rosé, and is a great buy at \$8.99. Imported by [Dan Kravitz/Hand Picked Selections](#), it is available at the Rosemont Markets, and given the wide availability of the red Cuvée de Peña, it most likely can be found on store shelves elsewhere in Maine.

Spain is a prolific producer of rosé, but this year the 2008 Spanish rosés seem to be slow in arriving in Maine. One I have tried, and enjoyed immensely, is the Mas Donis Capcanes Rosato, a Grenache-based rosé from Montsant, a region known principally for its red wines. It's fresh and fruity and would be great for sipping on a warm summer day, if those ever arrive. Imported by [Eric Solomon's European Cellars](#), the Mas Donis retails for around \$10, and is available at the Rosemont Markets.

While the 2008 rosés from Spain have been slow in coming, the same can't be said for Italian rosés. One of the most interesting is the Alois Lageder rosé, made from the aromatic Lagrein grape and emanating from the Trentino-Alto Adige in the Tyrolian Alps. This is an

intense, fruity wine that is very food-friendly. It retails for around \$16, and in the Portland area I have seen it at the Rosemont Markets.

Another one of my favorite rosés so far this year is the Cirò Rosato from Librandi. Made from 100% Gaglioppo grapes, this is a dark red, fruity rosé from Calabria. Imported by [Winebow](#), one of the top importers of Italian wines, it drinks well on its own, or with olives, tapenade, or other simple snacks, and sells for around \$12.

A newcomer to Maine is the 2008 "Campirosa" Montepulciano d'Abruzzo from Illuminati, whose red Montepulciano d'Abruzzo has been available here for several years. This is a dry but quite fruity, vibrant rosé, and would pair well with more substantial foods, such as grilled meats or pasta dishes. It retails for around \$13.

Undoubtedly, as summer progresses and the warm weather finally arrives, there will be more new rosés arriving at wine shops in Maine. But for now, while there may not be an abundance of sunshine, there is certainly an abundance of rosés for every palate.