

Rosé coloured glasses

Rosé coloured glasses are increasingly popular on the world stage. And while it's a wine type truly diverse in terms of style, it's generally not taken very seriously. Yet, as **SHARON WILD** discovered, there are some exciting innovations that are challenging negative perceptions towards the style.

“The world doesn't need another great red, so why not try and create the world's best Rosé – and prove that it can be taken seriously?” declared Sacha Lichine; winemaking heavyweight in Bordeaux and son of the great vintner and writer, Alexis Lichine, while explaining his latest – somewhat surprising – challenge. As he explained, to attempt to create another great Bordeaux or Burgundy would; “take three generations to do something dramatic. So I decided to look at regions where I could really make a difference on the fine wine stage – and sooner rather than later.” And that is precisely what he's doing. Welcome, everyone, to a new chapter in the world of Rosé.

Reflecting on Mr Lichine's sentiments, it does seem bizarre that no one has really attempted to do this till now. After all, Rosé sales worldwide have been going through the roof lately – in the UK, they increased by an almighty 27 per cent last year and doubled over the past four, while white and red wine sales remained stagnant. The category now represents around five to seven per cent of the world wine market. Australia, France, the US and Japan have also experienced growth, albeit not as dramatic as the UK. So we apparently love Rosé.

The Rosé's that are tickling us all pink are produced all over the globe. Around 75 per cent comes from Europe, while the USA produces circa 20 per cent and Australia and

New Zealand lag behind with a teensy two per cent. The

powerhouse of

Rosé production is Provence, France. Here, 80 per cent of France's Rosé is made (around 11 million cases per annum) equating to eight per cent of the world's total.

Provence occupies a huge chunk of southern France. It's divided into three key Appellations; the Côtes-de-Provence is in the east and spreads over 20,000 hectares from Aix-en-Provence as far as Fréjus which is not far from the glitz and glamour of St Tropez. Aix-en-Provence is in the western part of Provence and stretches from the Rhône Valley in the west to Montagne Sainte-Victoire in the East. The Côteaux Varois en Provence is sandwiched between the other two areas, in the stunning Var which lies to the north of the industrial port town; Toulon.

Production isn't just about quantity. It's worth noting that 75 per cent of Provence Rosé is AOC classified. Jancis Robinson stated in her column in June 2009; ‘the more Rosés I taste, the more I am convinced that the corner of the world that makes the best Rosé is the most obvious place of all; Provence.’ Provence was the chosen location for Sacha Lichine to embark upon his Rosé challenge; his property, Château D'Esclans, which he purchased in 2006 after several years of rigorous scouting, lies in the very heart of the region, in the pretty village of La Motte.

The varieties used to make Rosé in the various appellations of Provence are a happy marriage between the east and west regions that surround it. The region's proximity to the Rhone in the east accounts for the Grenache, Cinsault, Shiraz, Mourvedre and Rolle and Bordeaux to the west is reflected in Cabernet. Domaine Ott has, for example, in its *Château de Selle Rosé*, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache and Cinsault.

Vineyards housing 80 year old Grenache on the D'Esclans property appealed to Sacha Lichine and it is these stately vines that form the backbone of his top cuvees. In Australia, Rosés are produced from a gamut of varieties, although some of the best known that are produced from old vine Grenache include Charlie **Melton's Rosé Virginia** and **Turkey Flat**.

Provençal, and indeed European Rosé wines, are traditionally made from the brief maceration and soft pressing of red grapes. The result is not only a much lighter, clearer colour, but also a virtually tannin-free wine.

Recently, proposed changes to Rosé

