



The stunning view from the terrace of Chateau Margui.

production in the EU, which would have allowed red and white wines to be blended to make Rosé (outside Champagne), were abandoned. At the time, the European Commission insisted the changes would simply allow European winemakers to adopt the same techniques as New World rivals.

Asides what European wine laws stipulate, another fundamental difference between the new world Rosés (Australia, New Zealand, USA etc) and those of Provence (and Europe generally) is the resulting style. Aussie Rosés are generally bright in colour and in their fruit, bold in design and many are off-dry (some from the USA are downright syrupy!) especially at entry level. Provençal Rosés are generally paler, drier, and more delicate, even at the cheerful quaffing end of the spectrum. Chrissie McClatchie, sales and administration manager with Nice-based Vin Sans Frontières (suppliers of wines to Superyachts in the Côte D’Azur) and Rosé lover bar none says “The great thing about Provence Rosé is that they’re dry. I think there is so much potential in Australia to exploit this kind of style.”

Samantha Connew, senior winemaker at Wirra Wirra in McLaren Vale, observes of the Australian market for Rosé; “Certainly since we have been producing a Rosé (first vintage in 2002) there has been a huge increase in the number of Rosés on the market and more general acceptance of the style. I think people are looking for a more savoury, or a drier style than they were some years ago.” Connew’s comments are supported by the fact that one of the top selling Rosés in Australia of recent times is the **Arrogant Frog Shiraz Rosé**.

These wines hail from the Languedoc, France, a produced by French winemaker, Jean-Claude Mas, and distributed through Dan Murphy’s. As part of a Bastille Day Celebration lunch in 2008 at which the winemaker was present, the most popular wine on show was undoubtedly the Rosé with its delicate spicy red fruit, vinous overtones and clean, fresh dry palate. Even more amazing is the price – at around AUD10.00, it isn’t surprising that sales are going gangbusters.

The most challenging – and inspiring – Rosés of Provence, which are not yet available in Australia, are undoubtedly those of D’Esclans. In his quest to make kick-arse Rosé, Sacha Lichine enlisted the help of Patrick Leon (esteemed winemaker of Château Mouton Rothschild and Opus One). The top of the D’Esclans range – and the contender for the world’s greatest Rosé – is the extraordinary **Garrus**. Meticulously crafted from the fruit of 80 year old Grenache vines, the grapes are individually processed to eliminate all traces of stalk, the wines is then fermented and matured – in barriques that are individually temperature controlled. The result is a softness and fruit quality that defies belief.

And so does its price tag. At around EUR80 (Approximately AUD130), it is also currently the world’s most expensive Rosé outside Champagne. But is it worth it? Well, after only two vintages, the Garrus is commanding attention well beyond the Côte D’Azur and sells out within a couple of weeks of release. Wine Spectator, for example, awarded the wine 90 points; “*Very creamy and rich, with concentrated flavors of berry, cherry, pepper and spice. Broad and lush on the mineral finish.*”

If you can’t find (or afford) the Garrus, the **Whispering Angel** is the introduction to the D’Esclans range. It’s delicately scented with herbaceous plants and flowers, is soft and dry on the palate and the flavour lingers like a fine Rosé Champagne (approximately EUR20 retail in France).

If you do happen to be in Provence, other Rosés definitely worth seeking out include **Château Margüi**. Philippe Guillanton was the number three employee of Yahoo France and, in favour of a sea-change for him and his young family, was seduced by the Margüi property in the Côte Varois with its stately stone mansion, spectacular views of the area and run-down vineyards. Guillanton and his wife Marie-Christine reinvigorated the vines using biodynamic techniques and turned their hands to winemaking. Their resulting Rosé is made from Cinsault and Grenache, is lightly-coloured, with vibrant, dancing red fruit flavours, a soft structure and a long, succulent finish.

Guillanton isn’t alone in being seduced by a property in the area; his new neighbours are none other than Brad and Angelina – who bought Château Miraval. Acclaimed as one of the top 500 vineyards in France by Guide Hachette, Château Miraval is simply a magical place. Their Rosé is named **Pink Floyd** because the band recorded ‘The Wall’ at the property’s recording studio; possibly after a few glasses of their delicious, crisp yet fruity Rosé!

**Château Simone Palette Rosé** is rated as one of the ‘1001 Wines You Must Try Before You Die’. This Côtes de Provence represents virtually on its own the Appellation of Palette. Made from a huge variety of local grape varieties, it is a powerful, deeply coloured, intense Rosé.

The best known winery in the region is undoubtedly Domaine Ott. It has a bustling cellar door at its Mireille property, where it provides vinous relief to road-raged beachgoers tackling the ever-gridlocked ocean road to St Tropez.

If you are planning to tour the wineries of Provence, however, don’t try to go to lunch anywhere in the region after 2pm; you’ll only end up hungry and more road-raged. But not thirsty, at least. It’s an exciting new era in the world of Rosé wines. Anticipate more new chapters. ■