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gift guide & *must-have*
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RED, GREEN & ROSÉ

Written by Christopher Dixon,
Moët Hennessy Portfolio Manager
Photographed by Alex Ibarra
Model Kirsty Loreen with L.A. Models
Hair & Makeup by Krysta Withrow
with Carlyle Salon & Style Bar
Manicure & Pedicure by Karina Cordova
with Aqua Skin & Nail Bar using LVX in Sanguine
Location Montecito Inn

Laviniaturra Dress, Antoinette
Chanel Booties, Matti and Me
Jewelry by Gauthier Earrings & Ring

*M*ulberry and juniper, sappy pine,
or a dangling mistletoe twists 'n twines
among red apples and trees
of greened kind.

Chocolate boxes spring candies
brittle, an old man's brew breaths deep.
Stuffed socks cue like we're still little,
and the season smiles again.

Hot spiced cider and fine
china clash. Mom's ham 'n glaze shimmers
amid daily rhymes of family
folk, familiar times with those we love.

Heavy smoke can hide
in the wintry air too! Ash and clouds
side whilst dancing downward, shivering
truths while bloodlines bequeath wrapped items.

And who'd forget the rounded man?
Or days which span back to the stables, no room
or chimneys, only healing
fables dipped in aloe, frankincense and myrrh.

The gloss of red and green,
so bright! Holiday hues seen asplash warm-house
traditions. They tend toward sincere
and loving promises each yearend.

Hooray rosé Champagne!
Let us hum a merry tune in near
silence just now. This moment we've sought
seems here to appreciate and applaud.

My first-ever experience with rosé wine was as a guileless 21-year-old a good while back. Accompanied by my Costco card-carrying dorm mate, we nearly filled two push carts with white zinfandel for that weekend's sorority date party something-or-other. \$2.75 per bottle, we'd been sent on a mission. A dubious moment in my wine history, agreed, though I seem to recall the soirée turning out just peachy. To even mention white zin is obviously a playful jab, and in truth there are some lovely rosé still wines produced all over the world. Indeed, some delicious rosé still wines emanate from vineyards in our backyard of Santa Barbara. But as a wine professional and a simple lover of all things holiday in nature, my particular enchantment every December is with rosé Champagnes, which undergo a secondary or bottle fermentation in order to create their bubbles. Bubbly rosé, ah!

Red and pink Champagnes have become increasingly en vogue, now accounting for between 7-10% of Champagne's yearly production. The Champagne Bureau, USA, reports that annual shipments of rosé Champagne into the U.S. now top 2.5 million bottles, having more than doubled in the last decade. "Rosé all day" and expressions of that sort have become part of everyday vernacular.

Recently uncovered documents prove that rosé bubbly is no temporary fad, either. Historians at Ruinart found papers recording that on March 14, 1764—over 250 years ago—Ruinart sold bottles of rosé Champagne. It was previously thought that Veuve Clicquot was the first to produce and sell rosé Champagne, in 1775.

So how's it made and what's it all about?

There are two main methods of producing rosé Champagne. With the saignée method (meaning "bleeding" in French), a portion of red wine juice is pulled off the skins a few hours or sometimes a few days after crushing and then fermented with white wine techniques for maximum fruitiness and freshness, making the remaining red must more concentrated. This process accounts for a relatively small percentage of rosé Champagnes.

The second prominent method, rosé d'assemblage (blending), is utilized in creating a vast majority of present-day rosés, and is firmly credited to Madame Barbe-Nicole Clicquot of Veuve Clicquot. Unhappy with the taste of rosé Champagne made via maceration, the famed wine innovator and business woman experimented extensively with other techniques and variations on the production process. Prior to the secondary fermentation in the bottle wherein the bubbles are created, she opted, finally, to blend a small amount of red wine vinified to be non-tannic with a majority white wine in order to achieve her desired results. These red wines are crafted specifically for blending and the grapes are sourced from separate vineyards, adding to the overall crafting complexity and cost of production. So yeah, they are a little bit fancy.

Rosé Champagne is rarely sweet, so don't let those beautiful salmon, copper and cherry-red hues fool ya. And it's extremely versatile. Full flavor and body generally enable it to cope with stronger food flavors and textures. Acidity and forward fruit aromas make it a good match for grilled seafood, roast pork or even more exotically spiced dishes. And it's absolutely never a bad time to treat one's self to a glass alongside a chocolate-covered strawberry or two.

Hooray rosé Champagne! Here are 3 great options this holiday, cheers!

Veuve Clicquot Rosé



...aromas of fresh red fruit like raspberry, wild strawberry, cherry, blackberry...

This is a crowd-pleaser; a raucous, vampy woman of a wine.

Made using 50 to 60 different crus (vineyards), the cuvée (blend) is based on Veuve Clicquot Brut Yellow Label's traditional blend: 50 to 55% Pinot Noir, 15 to 20% Pinot Meunier, and 28 to 33% Chardonnay. The blend includes a particularly high percentage of reserve wines (25-40%) originating from several harvests, which ensures the consistency of the Pinot Noir-driven house style, and is completed with 12% red wines using black grapes from the village of Bouzy.

The wine has a luminous color with attractive pink glints. The nose is generous and elegant, with initial aromas of fresh red fruit like raspberry, wild strawberry, cherry, blackberry...leading to biscuity notes of dried fruits and Viennese pastries like almonds, apricots and brioche. There is urgent freshness here, hinting at orange blossom and bristling with acidity.

Locally...treat yourself to a staycation at the Montecito Inn with a little of this wine from check-in to Uber out.

Ruinart Rosé



Since 1729, Ruinart has been the oldest producer in Champagne. This rosé is sourced entirely from premiers crus vineyards and boasts a blend of 55% Pinot Noir and 45% Chardonnay from the best of recent vintages. A high proportion of pinot noir is vinified as red, up to 19% in the blend depending on the year to guarantee consistency.

Grapes from the estate vineyards in Sillery and Brimont (ancestral home of the Ruinart family) are joined by carefully selected grapes from other premiers crus vineyards in the Côte de Blancs and the Montagne

de Reims. The grapes are selected basket-by-basket at the source.

The wine is pomegranate pink with radiant orange-yellow rose petal reflections. The nose is characterized by focused red berries and tangerine scents along with a persistent suggestion of cinnamon. On the palate, the wine is vigorous and well balanced with accents of toasted almond, ground anise, pastry, dried apricot and blood orange flavors lifted by juicy acidity. A fine, fresh wine with well-integrated tannins and a hint of spice on the lengthy finish.

Locally...consider a 375mls half bottle and French fries at Lucky's, take in part of an evening football game in the bar area, and watch the pretty people shuffling outside dawning SB's equivalent of winter gear. Gotta love sparkling red jackets.

A fine, fresh wine with well-integrated tannins and a hint of spice on the lengthy finish.

Dom Pérignon Rosé 2004

For the finest moments in your liquid life, however often you can afford them, this is luxury.

Dom Pérignon started officially releasing their Rosé in 1962. Every release of Dom Pérignon is a vintage, meaning there's no blending of juice from different years. And every vintage release utilizes just two grape varietals: pinot noir and chardonnay. This is the magnificent winemaking proposition with each vintage release.

What makes this 2004 wine so special, even when compared to other excellent Dom Pérignon Rosé vintages? Well, 2003 was the warmest summer on record in the history of the Champagne region.

In stark contrast to the previous year, the vines experienced steady, problem-free growth in 2004, with abundant, sizable grape clusters. There were no weather extremes during most of the season. There is more pinot noir in this rosé than at any time over the last five decades, with 28% still red in the 2004 blend. So a lot of unique factors are converging here in an already iconic wine of the highest quality, aged nearly 12 years on expired yeasts cells toward truly becoming regal.

The wine's nose sings out loud and clear, beginning with fresh, intense red fruit: redcurrants

and wild strawberries, complemented by warm notes of ripe hay, blood orange and cocoa. On the palate, the attack is smooth and embracing, but it is the impression of precision that dominates in the end. The wine's chiseled integrity, intense and penetrating, is prolonged with the unexpected hint of green citrus and saline-infused minerality that marks the vintage.

Locally: Belmond El Encanto is an ideal locale to experience this remarkable wine. I recommend lounge area fireplace environs, where conversations can flow and on some nights a handsome crooner sings the classics. ★

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