

# ST. HELENA STAR

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## Crisp, affordable & fun

CATHERINE BUGUE MAY 9, 2019



Bouchaine Vineyards 2018 Vin Gris of Pinot Noir Los Carneros

A woman walks into a restaurant, bringing in a bit of the outdoor heat with her. She picks up the wine list at the bar and spots the rosé. She can almost feel the cool liquid taking her body temperature down a few degrees even before the shimmering pink glass is placed before her.

When she does take a sip, she is rewarded with a refreshing tingle and the deliciousness of spring flavors like red cherry, watermelon and white blossom.

A man walks into a retail shop to grab a bottle of wine for a casual dinner party. Not liking the red wine price tags staring back at him, he hesitates before spying a rosé, and quickly calculates: red fruity flavors, crisp, affordable, fun. Sold.

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Rosé wines are only increasing in production, being added to even the most stubborn of producer portfolios, as a must-have addition. Consumers appreciate a wine that marries red fruit flavors with a crisp palette—especially one at a reasonable price.

The Napa Valley Vintners/St. Helena Star Tasting Panel sat down last month to taste four flights of Napa Valley rosé wine from the 2017 and 2018 vintages. What did the panel think of our home-grown pinks? Were these wines to get easily scooped up at restaurant bars and retailers?

Christie Dufault, beverage program instructor at The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, confessed that as she started tasting the wines, her vocabulary shifted—she was writing down descriptors like watermelon, or phrases such as smells like rosés at the beach—terms which she admitted, to big laughs, that she would not let her own students use. She found the wines refreshing, crisp and juicy. “It’s what we all look for,” she commented, “easy-going-approachability.”

Michael Martin, general manager of St. Helena’s Market restaurant, noted the variety of rosé styles. As he tasted, he was thinking, “this one is for a day on the lake” or “this one is more serious; for food.”

Panelists discussed the styles, from very pale, almost water-white examples with faint cherry flavors, to those with a bowl full of intense red fruits and a bit of tannic backbone.

Liz Thach MW, a noted wine and management professor at Sonoma State University, commented that while her preferred style is bone dry with vibrant acidity, not all consumers may be looking for that same style. “Here, many are exquisite,” Liz explained.

Julie Lumgair took a winemaker’s eye to the rosés—they are harder to make,” she stated, before listing trouble points such as phenolic management (tannins, color). With tannin and color potential greater in these grape varieties (their thicker skins hold a bounty of both), there is a need to balance their effect with the vibrant freshness expected in a rosé wine. Grapes such as Pinot Noir, with its thinner skins, makes this task a bit easier for the vintner.

One style that was largely absent from the tasting: sweeter rosés. Panelists discussed the minimal selection with residual sugar; a noticeable reduction from previous vintages and tastings.

### **Top Favorites**

Whatever your preferred style, there is sure to be one in Napa Valley’s rosé portfolio Below are panelists top favorites and their styles and flavors.

**Bouchaine Vineyards 2018 Vin Gris of Pinot Noir Los Carneros** provides heady aromas of passion fruit and banana, and may just spark a trip to the tropics.



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