

ROSÉ

by Don Panagapka (AWO News #23)

Last June on Winetalk I mentioned that I felt that it would be a good idea for members to perhaps put one of their winning recipes on Winetalk to stimulate discussion on a particular category of wine and, more importantly for winemakers to better their winemaking skills. I received some positive response from a number of winemakers and so now that my summer holidays are over and I am home more than one night at a time I thought I would submit my recipe and philosophy of a wine category.....in this case the class Rosé.

Background: it seems to me that Rosé is an unheralded class that warrants more recognition. In the Rhone/Provence/Languedoc areas of France Rosé is considered a part of everyone's daily consumption of wine. The Rosés of Tavel, for example, are excellent examples of some of the finest Rosés in the world. Here in Ontario, however, it seems that they are not taken seriously at all. After all, most AWO members blend a red and a white until it is the right colour and enter it into our competitions.

I had the opportunity to travel to Provence and taste many Rosés. I attempted to dissect the components that I thought made a nice Rosé and came back to Ontario with what I thought was perhaps the right formula. Since that time (1996) my success at making Rosés has improved dramatically.

The Rosés I tasted had the following qualities:

- 1) they were subtle in flavour with light tannins
- 2) they had an obvious fruity component that was there but was not overpowering
- 3) the sugar component was dry to ever so slightly off dry

Firstly, how was I to get the fruit? For the most part In Provence the Grenache grape is used. Since Grenache is not available here I acquired some from our good friend Dominic via the Lodi area. This Grenache I used for two purposes: to rack off early in the fermentation for the Rosé part, leaving the rest to make a Rhone-style wine (with more intensity, perhaps combined with Syrah)

Secondly, I looked for Ontario red grapes that might make a nice Rosé. In my mind the Pinot Noir, Cab Franc, and Merlot had the right qualities to potentially produce a good quality Rosé. They all have nice fruit and subtle flavours (as opposed to say the Cabernet grape). All of these grapes were dealt with in the same way. Start the fermentation, then when the colour is atypical Rosé, rack off approximately 15% of the must to make a Rosé, and the rest will be more concentrated to make a more full-bodied red.

Then I made a Rosé out of each of Pinot, Cab Franc, Merlot, and the Grenache.

All of these (with the possible exception of the Grenache) were still heavier than I wanted when the fermentation was finished. I determined that the tannins were too high for a Rosé and so went about reducing them with the addition of egg-white. Now I had 4 subtle-tannin fruity Rosés.

Then in the final summation I blended the 4 Rosés using different blends of the 4 until I had 2 or 3 that I thought were ideal. After that it was the task of the judges to determine which was the best.

I have to say that at the beach a Rosé is the most appealing of the wines that my guests want. Perhaps it is the novelty, but I believe that the subtle flavours, the light fruitiness, and cool serving temperature of the Rosés are their attractions. Hopefully this will stimulate some discussion and all of us (including me) will make better and better Rosés in the future.