

Varietal Focus: Rosé



Lance Cutler

BACK IN 1990, THE esteemed wine writer **Gerald Asher** participated on a panel discussing what the wine business would be like in the year 2000. Specifically, his panel was to discuss what consumers would be drinking in the year 2000. Asher began his comments with some history, “After World War II, Portugal produced some wines that were pink, slightly sweet and a bit frizzante. Those wines were called **Mateus** and **Lancers**, and they were wildly successful. In the ’60s and ’70s winemakers would bleed off (saignée) wine from their red tanks in the hopes of intensifying the resulting red wine. The wine they bled off was bottled as a separate wine that was pink, slightly sweet and a bit frizzante. It was a great success.

“In the ’80s and ’90s Chardonnay was all the rage in California, and there was a shortage of white winegrapes. Winemakers made a white style of wine from ancient Zinfandel vines, whose fruit no one wanted. That wine was called White Zinfandel and was a smashing success. It was pink, slightly sweet and a bit frizzante.” Asher paused and then concluded with, “I am not sure what consumers will be drinking in the year 2000, but I am reasonably sure that it will be pink, slightly sweet and a bit frizzante.” Even now in 2015, Asher’s prediction still applies.

It is very likely that the earliest red wines looked more like pink Rosé than the current dark, inky purple and crimson wines of today. Back then, if presses were available, they weren’t terribly efficient. Grapes were usually pressed by hand or foot or twisted in cloth soon after harvest with very little maceration. Black grapes were often mixed with white grapes. Some historians believe that even after efficient wine presses became more common, it took consumers a long time to warm up to the darker, more tannic wines.

The point here is that Rosé has been around since man has been drinking wine. There are three primary ways to produce Rosé: Red wine and white wine can be blended together to produce a wine that is pink in color, but in modern times this is occurring less and less frequently. Black grapes can be destemmed or crushed into tanks, allowed to sit on the skins for a few hours or days, and then bled off (saignée) to make Rosé wine. Finally, grapes can go directly to the press (vin gris) where the whole clusters are pressed immediately to produce light, vibrant wines.

France produces more Rosé wines than any other country, most famously in Provence. Areas like Côtes de Provence,

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Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence and Bandol are famous for their Rosés, which account for 60 to 80 percent of all the wines produced in the region. Tavel in the southern Rhône Valley produces Rosé exclusively. Italy, Spain and Portugal all produce large amounts of Rosé wine. In fact, virtually every wine-producing country in the world makes Rosé.

Traditionally in France, Rosé is made from Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Mourvèdre, Carignan and Gamay, among others. In Spain, Rosado leans toward Garnacha, Graciano, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Carignan. Italians make Rosato primarily from Nebbiolo, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Californians will seemingly make Rosé from any grape variety, but for years it was blush wine made from Zinfandel in a sweeter style called White Zinfandel that dominated the market. Bottom line: someone, somewhere has made Rosé from virtually every red grape variety known to man.

Whatever grape varieties are being used and whatever methods have been employed, making good, dry Rosé is a balancing act. The challenge is to extract enough aroma, flavor and structure from a minimum of skin contact. Winemakers need enough acidity to keep the wine bright, crisp and refreshing, but they need to coax enough flavor and richness to lend weight to the palate. Rosés should remind you of the varieties from which they are derived, but they shouldn't taste like red wines made from those varieties. Finally, there is the color, which many winemakers insist doesn't concern them, but there is no denying that much of the allure of good Rosé comes from the delicate hues of orange and pink displayed in the glass and bottle.

Because Rosé is made primarily from red grape varieties but gets very little time in contact with the skins, the wines tend to have reduced phenolics, such as anthocyanins and tannins. It also means fewer antioxidants, which can affect ageability. The limited maceration of Rosés accounts for the lighter color, less astringency and a greater susceptibility to oxidation. For this reason, Rosés have a shorter shelf-life and are generally consumed soon after release.

For this Varietal Focus, we decided to concentrate on dry Rosés. We wanted to try single variety Rosés like **Broc Cellars** White Zinfandel from **Chris Brockway**, **Robert Sinskey Vineyards'** Vin Gris of Pinot Noir made by **Jeff Virnig** and Grenache Rosé by **Peter Mathis** of **Mathis Wine**. We delved into blends of Portuguese varieties with **Matthew Rorick** of **Forlorn Hope Wines**, Italian varieties with **Sam Bilbro** and his **Idlewild Wines**, and Rhône varieties from two wineries: **Halter Ranch** and winemaker **Kevin Sass** as well as **Robert Hall** and winemaker **Don Brady**. Red C Rosé from **Jeff Morgan** at **Covenant Wines** is an example of the saignée method. Finally, there is a big bold Rosé from **Tobin James Cellars** and its winemaker **Jeff Poe**.



Broc Cellars

2014 WHITE ZINFANDEL (100% ZINFANDEL), 11.5% ALC., 224 CASES, \$24

Chris Brockway grew up in Nebraska and Iowa. After college, he got involved in the restaurant business, which ignited an interest in wine. He bounced around, taking courses at **UC Davis** before completing a degree in enology at **California State University, Fresno**. He worked at **Rosenbloom Winery** and **JC Cellars**, before launching his **Broc Cellars**, dedicated to minimalistic, small-lot winemaking.

According to Brockway:

“I’m looking to make a light, bracing, refreshing Rosé. This wine is made from 100 percent Zinfandel coming from two vineyards. The vineyards sit at 1,000 feet elevation with soils composed of sandy loam. They are non-certified organic. We use no sulfur in the vineyard and do some minimal leaf pulling. The sections I use for this Rosé tend to get fried by the sun if left to ripen for Zinfandel. We figured if we picked early and made Rosé wine, we might save the fruit and come up with something of interest.

“Most years we harvest between 20.5° and 21.5° Brix. This vineyard is unique because even at these low sugars, the pH and TA of the fruit is very well-balanced. Typically, we destem the grapes and let the juice sit on the skins. This year gave more color faster, so we reduced the skin contact time, but it still finished darker than my previous Rosés.

“We pressed the grapes to plastic tanks, then racked to stainless where the wine fermented at about 70° F. We used native yeast and made no acid or nutrient additions. We fermented to dryness or at least negative Brix. Then the wine sat on its lees and went through partial malolactic. We chilled the wine at 42° F for two weeks to cold-stabilize but did no heat-stabilization. We added 15 to 20 ppm SO₂ prior to bottling. The wine was sterile-filtered and got three weeks bottle age before release.”



Tasting Notes

Brockway: This wine has a bit of reduction on the front of the nose. I get some rhubarb with some strawberry and maybe a hint of pepper—both white and black. There is also a bit of savoriness. The texture is nice, a bit heavier than I like, but there is a nice mouth-watering effect, sort of like a refreshing, re-hydrating watermelon aspect.

Rorick: Certain wines have that weight of water. They seem to dance across the palate. I enjoy this wine on the palate. It expresses itself effortlessly. Even as a Rosé, I get the varietal character of Zinfandel. There is that brambly aspect to it even though it is in that red fruit register. It is identifiable as Zinfandel and tastes really good.

Morgan: Texturally, I really like it. It is showing more of the acid that I look for in my own Rosé, that brightness. It is very lively. I got a bit of that reduction in the taste, but it blew off. I’m interested in that brambly, rhubarb character. The wine is more herbaceous than fruit-driven, but rhubarb is definitely what drives it. At the end, the acid comes right to your tongue and stays there with a ginger, orange peel finish that I find intriguing. In the very end I get the good bitterness of hops.

Mathis: What strikes me aromatically is a note of cake or confectioner’s sugar. It has a fresh, bright acidity, a nice cool mouthfeel and good balance. The color distresses me. It is kind of florid, which mentally distracts me.

Virnig: My initial impression is brambly with a hint of green bean. It has nice acidity and finishes bright and crisp. There is even a hint of stem. It wasn’t big on the fruit spectrum. It is not my favorite, but I don’t dislike it.

Bilbro: It speaks very much of Zinfandel and has that red, raspberry fruit profile. I mainly get a ton of Zinfandel spice, white and black pepper and even a hint of green as well and some green herbs. All of that takes away the laser-like acid. I don’t get a lot of breadth. I get more of a straight linear feel in the mouth.

Poe: I like the vibrant pink color. I am getting melon on the nose with a spice like light cinnamon. The cinnamon comes through on the palate too. There is a little grassy character to it on the palate.

Sass: It smells a little like a salted lime margarita, even with a touch of jalapeño. I get a lot of lime. On the palate it is a very tight, linear wine without a lot of mouth-filling weight to it. I get a touch of herb, and it is very crisp on the finish with a lot of acid.

Brady: I get that same spiciness with a sort of strawberry shortcake, raspberry fruit. In the mouth it is a bit savory. It is medium-bodied, fresh and bright.



Forlorn Hope

2013 KUMO TO AME ROSÉ (50% TOURIGA NACIONAL, 30% TINTA RORIZ, 15% TINTO CÃO, 5% TRINCADEIRA), 11.3% ALC., 407 CASES, \$24

Matthew Rorick sums up his winemaking this way: “All of our Forlorn Hope wines are made from winegrapes. That’s it.” (Sometimes, he will add small amounts of SO₂.) After receiving his degree in viticulture and enology from **UC Davis**, Rorick worked on a diverse number of winemaking projects, including collaborations with wineries in New Zealand, South Africa and Chile, as well as with **Peter Michael Winery**, **Chasseur** and **Miura Vineyards** in California, among others.

According to Rorick:

“I wanted to make a Rosé that tasted like the Rosés from Provence, and I wanted to showcase site over variety. This wine is made from a blend of Portuguese grape varieties farmed in Amador County. The vineyard soils are Josephine series made up of decomposed granite, quartz and volcanic soil. The DeWitt vineyard sits at 1,300 feet with a wet/southwest exposure. Vine spacing is 6x8 feet; and while we know the root stock is 1103P, we have no data on specific clones. The vineyard is traditionally farmed and irrigated. We sucker the vines but do no fruit thinning or leaf pulling, giving us 6 tons per acre.

“We found that these grapes at this site had nice flavors around 21° Brix with good acidity, but by the time they reached 23° Brix a lot of that acid had dropped out. We decided to make a Rosé from the slower ripening sections. We determine when to pick by monitoring Brix (shooting for an upper limit of 19.5°) and pH (aiming for 3.1 to 3.3). We also take into account the amount of fruit and the condition of the overall canopy.

“Grapes are picked as a field blend but not sorted. Then 40 ppm SO₂ is added at reception, and fruit is whole-cluster pressed. Pressed juice is settled at 50° F overnight and then racked off lees to stainless tanks or neutral barrels. Wine ferments on native yeast (at 60° F in tank and 70° F in barrel). No acid or nutrients are used. When wine goes to sugar dryness, after four to five weeks, SO₂ is adjusted to 30 ppm. We do not heat- or cold-stabilize, but we do sterile filter the wine (as it has not gone through malolactic fermentation). The wine was bottled in the January following harvest. This wine got eight months of bottle age before release.”



Tasting Notes

Rorick: There are delicate aromatics with hints of things such as a mix of lavender, sage and floral characteristics. Those floral characteristics carry over onto the palate as well with stone fruit blossoms, not clubbing you over the head but drawing you in for another taste along with a savory note. I’m happy with the texture. There is a bit of weight, texture and roundness that I think complements the acidity.

Morgan: I think this wine tastes just like Provence. This brings me right back to the south of France. It’s got that herb de Provence, hint of olive and strong citrus component. It has great texture and a nice balance of acid. It is firm and bright and light, but not a lightweight. It would make a versatile wine with food and yet is refreshing.

Brockway: There is some complex dry scrub from Amador here. I get a lot of spearmint, orange peel and savory Echinacea component. This is one of those funny wines that I get all those same things on the palate. This is elevated and lifted on the palate. It has nice weight but carries it lightly.

Brady: This has a medium salmon color with pear and lemon oil in the nose, which makes it very interesting. It is bright and a bit spritzy, which makes the wine even fresher. It is balanced to dry. Good stuff.

Sass: I get lemon along with sage and a slight touch of apple with CO₂ on the palate. It is very lemony and citrus-based on the palate. It is probably the most acidic wine so far, a lot of acid. Almost borderline tart.

Poe: I get cranberry and rose petal on the nose. It is tart with a lot of acid. It is lime/lemon-oriented on the front palate, and it really hits you. It is pleasant. I like the front end, and it follows through the palate to make a very refreshing wine.

Virnig: The nose to me is citrusy with green strawberry. It is linear and bright and palate-cleansing. It finishes crisp and would benefit with food. I like it, but it seems slightly under-ripe.

Bilbro: Citrus peel and tart red berry and then a lot of macerated flower aromas. There is a bit of dust, which reminds me of the Port varieties. I like the wine a lot. There is some nice purity to it. I wish it had more movement in the mouthfeel. It is linear but would be more interesting and complex if it moved somewhere.

Mathis: I resonate with the citrus, lime peel and blossom comments. It is fresh and light-bodied. The low alcohol shows, and it is fresh in that regard. It is a bit marred by some subtle, chalky phenolics. For me, it is too much. It could have been balanced off with a kiss of sugar or a bit of fining.

Robert Sinskey Vineyards

2014 VIN GRIS OF PINOT NOIR (100% PINOT NOIR), 13.6% ALC.,
3,000 CASES, \$28

Jeff Virnig is sort of the **Bill Belichick** of Napa Valley, based on longevity alone. He has been the winemaker for **Robert Sinskey Vineyards** since 1991. A graduate of **Cal Poly** with a degree in agriculture, he has championed the Los Carneros region of Napa Valley, concentrating on maintaining wine balance through soil building. The Vin Gris of Pinot Noir produced at Robert Sinskey Vineyards is one of California's most iconic Rosés.

According to Virnig:

“Our main focus for this wine is to make a wine compatible with food. We want it to be crisp, lively, elegant and bone dry with an essence of sweetness that comes from the aromatics.

“The wine is produced using 100 percent Pinot Noir. Our vineyards are barely above sea level with mostly clay loam soils devised of Brissa Dibble, Hare loam series and some Maxwell series clays. Our clones include 114 Dijon, Pommard 4, INRA 459 and S-selection, which is an heirloom clone.

We have 101-14, 5BB and 1103P rootstock, but I don't think that makes a big difference with Rosé wine. All of our vineyards are 100 percent certified organically grown and Biodynamically farmed (but not certified). We use drip irrigation.

“We control vigor in the vineyard by controlling the fertility of the soil. The area is very lean microbially with less than 1 percent organic material. We have worked for years to build the soil, starting with calcium/magnesium levels. In the vineyard, the goal is balanced vine architecture, so we will drop fruit and pull leaves as needed.

“To pick, we go primarily by taste, looking for floral character and dry herb instead of green and herbaceous. We sample for TA, pH and Brix, mindful that our goal is a finished wine between 13 to 13.5 percent alcohol. We also follow the Antipodean Astro Calendar (BD) and strive to dovetail these harvest parameters with fruit and flower day of the BD calendar.

“Grapes are picked by hand and sorted in the field with green berries and seconds dropped before harvest. Grapes are night-picked and 100 percent whole-cluster pressed. Free-run and press juice is kept together and moved to a tank for 72 hours of settling at 45° F. We will add acid (striving for finished wine at 6.2 to 6.4 g/l). We will also use nutrients when necessary. After settling, we rack off the lees, raise temperature to 58° F and add M-2 or QA-23 yeast. Fermentation usually takes 24 to 28 days and occurs at 58° F to 62° F. After fermentation, we allow wine to sit on lees for a couple of weeks before racking the separate lots and adding 50 ppm SO₂ to prevent malolactic. Wine will get racked again for the final blend.

“Wine is cold-stabilized two to three weeks and heat-stabilized with bentonite, usually 2 pounds per 1,000 gallons. The wine is cross-flow filtered and then sterile-filtered at .45 microns. We retain some CO₂, usually bottling under 900 ppm. Although we try for three months, demand for the wine makes bottle-aging difficult. Usually we bottle in January and are sold out in June.”



Tasting Notes

Virnig: I think this is one of the better Rosés we've done in the past few years. I love its presence. I get that lavender in the pink pastel candies and some rose petal. Then I like the weight in the mouth. It has nice flesh with a backbone of crisp acidity that I don't think is over the top. I wouldn't change anything about this wine.

Bilbro: I like that this is clearly Pinot Noir, yet it is not phenolic. It is very light and delicate. It has snappy acid that is not too intense. Aromatically, it is bright spring blossoms, a kind of mixed floral.

Mathis: I get a lot of estery strawberry aromas with a bit of gooseberry. There are some green background notes that are subtle enough to be pleasant. It is an ester-driven wine. There is some star jasmine in the aroma. It is fresh in the mouth. This is as big as you want to see it but still makes you want to gulp it. It is bracing, and I admire the CO₂ level, which is in my personal sweet spot.

Morgan: This is bubbly with CO₂. It definitely has that lavender and floral herb de Provence thing going on. It has great acidity with a mineral core, which I happen to love. It is refreshing, almost steely at the end. It is an amazingly versatile wine that I would be happy drinking with almost anything on my plate.

Rorick: There is a CO₂ tingle that is refreshing and makes it lively and fun. There is definitely lavender with bright acidity, along with wonderful weight for a Rosé. There is some unexpected stone fruit on the palate, sort of yellow plum sweetness, which serves as a great balance and contrast to the herbal components.

Brockway: To add onto that, I get some cantaloupe with some stone fruit, such as apricot kernel. The acid is hitting me a bit hard, maybe because of an acid addition. There is not a lot of acid, but it is hitting me a bit sharp.

Brady: I get pear and apple with a little citrus rind. Very nice acid balance with a bit of minerality and fleshiness. It is attractive wine.

Poe: Mandarin orange peel stands out on the nose, along with some pear. It definitely has acid up front, along with a lot of citrus. It is pretty firm. It slowly falls away through the mid-palate and doesn't really linger on the back end, but the front end is very interesting.

Sass: This has the lightest color of the wines I've seen so far. I got a hint of floral color and lemon zest, along with a bit of grapefruit. There is perceptible CO₂ on the front of the palate, along with citrus notes. I think it is balanced but without the weight some of the Rhône varieties have shown in the mid-palate. It has a very clean finish with really good balance from beginning to end.

Idlewild Wines

2014 "THE FLOWER" FLORA & FAUNA ROSÉ (1/3 NEBBIOLO, 1/3 DOLCETTO, 1/3 BARBERA), 12.4% ALC., 280 CASES, \$22

Sam Bilbro grew up in Sonoma County as the son of **Chris Bilbro**, founder of **Marietta Cellars**, in 1979. Bilbro bounced around, working in the restaurant business and falling in love with Italian varietals. He chooses to seek out grape varieties traditionally grown in Piedmont and Northern Italy, and then turn them into vibrant, crisp wines. He knows where he wants to go with his winemaking, and he thinks he knows how to get there.

According to Bilbro:

"My challenge with this wine is to blend three Italian varieties, all of which ripen differently, and somehow co-ferment them to produce a Rosé that is bright, fresh and savory with broader depth than usual. I want the wine to be driving but versatile.

"This vineyard sits at an elevation of 700 feet with gravelly, sandy clay loam (Redvine) soils. Vine spacing is 6x9 feet, and exposure is west/northwest. The vineyard is farmed traditionally and is lightly irrigated. We do one early suckering, one mowing and one disking. There is minimal sulfur spraying as needed, but there is no dropping of fruit or leaf pulling in normal years.



These varieties want to push crop, and we allow them to carry 3 to 4 tons per acre. Since we do make red wine from this same vineyard and these same varieties, the fruit for the Rosé tends to come from shaded rows or soil types that make full ripening more difficult.

"To determine when to pick, I go by taste, then acid and finally Brix. Because the varieties are co-fermented, I am looking for a confluence of the three varieties. It isn't about the pieces but rather how the whole comes together. For this wine, Nebbiolo was picked at 18.5° Brix while the Dolcetto was picked at 21.5° Brix. The Barbera came in at 22.1° Brix. I am looking for the acid to still hurt a little bit and the flavor to just break into floral and red fruit character. Picking this early, we retain high tartaric acidity, which I think lends some chalky, mineral character to the wine.

"We pick in the morning but not too early. Since we use native yeast, I don't want the grapes too cold. All of the fruit is whole-cluster pressed with no SO₂ or nutrients added. There is no settling, and fermentation usually begins within a day. The wine ferments in the 60° F range for the most part, peaking between 68° F and 75° F. When the wine is around 1° Brix, I stir up the lees and rack it into neutral barrels to finish primary and begin native malolactic. We will move the barrels into the sun to keep the wine warm for malolactic.

"Because the wine has a pH of 3.17, I feel that I am in a 'safe zone,' so I wait until malolactic is finished and the wine turns clear before I add 40 ppm SO₂, which gives about 20 ppm free after fall out. The wine remains in barrel on the lees, with no stirring for four months. We top once a month. The wine is neither cold- nor heat-stabilized. We cross-flow filter and then sterile-filter at .45 microns. The wine gets one month bottle age before release."



Tasting Notes

Bilbro: I like that it is linear-driven with a lot of energy, but it is still broad. It changes more than other Rosés as it opens up in the glass. I like it better after five minutes in the glass. I get tart melons, alpine herbs and alpine flowers. I get a salty, saline mineral, which gives a savory quality that I like a lot. The texture fills out the mouthfeel a bit. I like my wines to run toward the finish with energy but go out and then in, so there is breadth and weight and contours and textures.

Virnig: Your description of savory alpine herb is what I get, and it makes my mouth water. Mostly sage and then rosemary. Early on there is a nice red berry, strawberry preserve aroma, along with dried rose petals. For its brightness, it has nice weight through the mid-palate. It's phenolically balanced in spite of the Barbera. I like it.

Mathis: I get some green apple, elder flower and old rose character aromatically. It has fresh acidity and balances nicely with the residual sugar. I feel the sweetness a bit more at the tail end of this wine. It is the thing that lingers in a pleasant way.

Sass: It is light in color, kind of a low intensity salmon. I get a bit of peaches and cream, along with apple in the nose. There is stone fruit, apricot and even a bit of potpourri aromatically. It is bright in fruit character with medium body on the mid-palate and a very clean, easy finish. I like it.

Brady: Really kind of briary, along with apple and pear, that pomme fruit kind of thing. It is medium in the mouth and pleasant. It has medium acidity and makes for a really clean, fresh wine.

Poe: I get the apple in the aroma with a lot of subtle floral character. I like the front hint of a kind of melon. It is medium-bodied with a nice weight. The finish is nice with a bit of raspberry stem on the end.

Rorick: On the palate this wine is a bit of a surprise based on the color appearance. The wine is softer, rounder and more forward than I would have expected. There is an interesting candied fruit character. Still good acid but more dense.

Morgan: It is an odd wine, showing oxidation. It is very tropical with guava-like aromas that I find inappropriate in Rosé. There is a foxy quality to the flavor. It reminds me of native American grapes.

Brockway: I get a cinnamon quality to the wine, possibly enhanced by a hint of oxidation. It seems like this has gone through at least a partial malolactic, if not full malolactic, fermentation. The color makes it look light, so the nutty, slightly oxidized flavor kind of dominates the wine. It is an interesting wine for me.



Mathis Wine

2014 ROSÉ DE GRENACHE (100% GRENACHE), 13% ALC., 400 CASES, \$18

Peter Mathis used to make furniture in Massachusetts. He got interested in wine and eventually headed to California where he landed a job making wine at **Ravenswood Winery**. He's been at Ravenswood for 25 years and currently holds the position of general manager. In 1997 he purchased a 7.5-acre vineyard parcel, planted it primarily to Grenache and started **Mathis Wine**.

According to Mathis:

"Provencal Rosé is my model, so I am trying to produce a wine that is light, dry and refreshing. Structure is a key focus. To that end I look for low phenolics and bitterness with moderate alcohol. I want a wine that is broad enough to fill the mouth but light enough to gulp down. It is important that the wine be gulpable. I want a wine that is light in color with a salmon hue that goes great with food or will stand alone as a refreshing wine in the heat of summer.

"My vineyard is south-facing at an elevation of 300 feet with volcanic, basalt and tuff soils. Vine spacing is 6 feet between vines but only 4.5 feet between rows. The rootstock is St. George, and the clones are 513 and 515. The vineyard is traditionally farmed and has drip irrigation. We will do some thinning on the weaker vines but not much, and we'll do some light leaf pulling. While I don't farm specifically for Rosé, those portions of the vineyard with more vigor are designated for the Rosé, and we'll carry a crop of 4 to 5 tons per acre.

"I determine when to pick entirely by taste, waiting for that typical raspberry Grenache sweetness to appear in the fruit. We pick early in the morning to get cold fruit to help control the color, which is important to me. The fruit is sorted in the field as we pick. Everything is whole-cluster pressed, and 35 ppm SO₂ is added. We make the press cut dependent on color. The juice gets a Polyact (a combination of PVPP and potassium caseinate) addition to manage tannins and is cold-settled for two days at 50° F. Once racked clean, Zymaflore X5 yeast is added. We will add DAP and Bioferm at 21° Brix as needed. Fermentation is carried out at 55° F to 58° F in stainless steel tanks and lasts about one month. The wine is kept at 45° F, and we will manage sweetness and CO₂ levels before sterile filtering and bottling. We hold the bottled wine for a month before release."



Tasting Notes

Mathis: It has strawberry, raspberry, watermelon fruit character. It is relatively simple and not aromatically high. It is low ester. It has a very nice sweet/acid/CO₂ balance, which push against each other in a very nice way. It finishes with CO₂ effervescence that gives it a nice freshness.

Bilbro: I agree that it is not an outright aromatic Rosé; it is pretty dialed back. There is a nice "water-like" quality that I like, which makes it very drinkable. Personally, I like a bit more aromatics and a more pronounced personality, but that is strictly personal. I think you have achieved your goals very well here.

Virnig: I get flint and mineral, which might be a little reductive, but it blew off in the glass. I got fresh strawberry, and it had a crisp entry. The palate was light to medium. It was fresh, crisp and refreshing with a hint of watermelon rind, which I like. I like the beautiful color. As the wine warms up, all of the elements come together to make a very enjoyable wine.

Brockway: I definitely get some Grenache character and some of that weightiness that comes from the grape. So there is a varietal aspect. It doesn't have a round weightiness but some of the "baby fat" you get from Grenache sometimes. It has an acid backbone and a slight hint of reduction on the nose.

Rorick: In the beginning there was quite a bit of reduction and something that almost smells like wheat or fresh, milled sawdust. It is varietally typical of Grenache with nice texture, weight and acid. It has presence on the palate without being bulky or heavy. There is a hint of "grip," possibly from skin contact. It is well rendered.

Morgan: The nose is a bit strange, but on the palate it is nice with reasonably good structure and acidity. There are no noticeable fruit qualities but some nice mineral elements. It doesn't hold together as well as the Sinskey, but it is reasonably nice.

Poe: The first thing off the nose is dry fruit, like dry apricot. It's nifty. The acid level is not quite as high as some of the others we've been tasting. The dried fruit stays on the mid-palate, and it is a light to medium body. I don't get a whole bunch of berry or fruit on the palate.

Brady: There is some sweet candied fruit, almost like a maraschino cherry. It is really elegant and medium-bodied in the mouth with a kind of citrus rind that I find really attractive. It helps keep the wine fresh.

Sass: I get bit of Riesling-type fusel character, along with some waxy, maybe maraschino cherry to it. The palate has a bit of the same with nice weight, almost like there is sweetness up front, but in the back there is enough acid to hold it. It finishes clean and is very easy to drink.

Halter Ranch

2014 ROSÉ (71% GRENACHE, 9% SYRAH, 13% MOURVÈDRE, 7% PICPOUL BLANC), 13.6% ALC., 2,100 CASES, \$21

Kevin Sass graduated from **Cal State Fresno** with degrees in enology and agricultural business. He worked as the winemaker at **Justin Winery**, before moving to **Halter Ranch** in 2011 to run their wine program.

According to Sass:

“Our intent with the Rosé is to make a wine that is easy drinking, low in alcohol and expresses the varieties it is made from. We want a wine that is light and crisp yet maintains some weight on the palate. The wine should have good natural acidity that is maintained from beginning to end and goes well with food.

“Our vineyards have an elevation of 1,600 feet with calcareous clay loam soils and a south-facing exposure. Vines are planted 8x6 feet. The rootstock is all 1103, and we use Tablas Creek, Alban and M 315 clones. Our vineyard is irrigated and is Sustainability in Practice Certified (SIP).

“We shoot-thin, sucker and perform some light lateral removal. The portion of the vineyard going to Rosé gets less crop drop than the part going to red wine, usually keeping two clusters per shoot, but we do remove the wings. Usually, we average 3 tons per acre for the Rosé.

“To decide when to pick, we go by taste and analysis. Sugar levels and acid will be the primary determination. We shoot for 22° to 23° Brix and for the taste to veer away from herbal flavors. Tasting is important because it influences how long we cold-soak. The more tannic the skins, the less we will cold-soak, between 24 and 48 hours.

“If varieties are close enough to ripeness, we will field-blend; otherwise, we ferment lots separately. Grapes are hand-harvested at night into macro bins. All of our fruit is destemmed and sorted then returned to macro bins. The bins are moved to our cold room and held at 35° F for 24 to 48 hours, depending on phenolics. After cold-settling, we go to a bladder press, making cuts depending on color and pH. We settle juice for two days at 52° F then rack clean and add 4 pounds per 1,000 gallons of bentonite. We wait 24 hours, rack again and add Vin 13 yeast, which works well and is cold-tolerant. We ferment in stainless steel except for the Picpoul Blanc which is barrel-fermented.

“The natural acidity in the Picpoul Blanc means we don’t need to add acid to the wine. We make nutrient additions, as needed, at one-third fermentation. Two days after yeast inoculation, we will bubble medical grade oxygen, using a sparging stone through the juice to prevent reduction. We begin fermentation at 58° F, slowly working down to 52° F; but once we hit 6° Brix, we’ll allow the juice to warm up to 60° F to finish fermentation at full dryness. Fermentation usually lasts 14 to 16 days.

“We leave the wine on gross lees until it gets a bit stinky; then we rack clean. We cold-stabilize with carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC). We cross-flow filter and then sterile-filter at bottling. We taste the wine weekly to determine release dates, usually four to six weeks after bottling.”



Tasting Notes

Sass: It has a light watermelon color. There is no visible CO₂ in this, which is intentional. I get a combination of watermelon, kiwi and strawberry aromatics and a bit of citrus. It has a soft entry. The acid starts and completes the wine all the way through. There is not a lot of sharpness or angles to it. The flavors are wild strawberry, with a bit of framboise. It coats the mouth and finishes very clean with good acid that is not too sharp.

Poe: That strawberry and kiwi on the nose pop out nicely. The acid is prominent and pops enough to give it that berry sensation, along with a bit of minerality. The front palate is bright. It falls off on the mid-palate and finishes soft. The balance is nice on the front palate and mid-palate. It flows off the back palate nicely.

Brady: Bright, fresh and clean with that watermelon and strawberry, along with Granny Smith aromatics. It is not overripe at all but fresh and clean. In the mouth it is rounder than I expected. I like the way it is balanced with fresh acidity to finish it out.

Morgan: This is herbal with olive in the nose. It is steely with pretty good acidity and nice body. It finishes with a bit of orange peel essence. It has a bit of an oily quality that I find unusual, but it is quite nice. A bit more citrus or red fruit would make this great.

Rorick: Aromatically, I get a lot of white peach. On the attack, I got all of that olive and non-fruit character, which was quite a surprise. Eventually, the white peach aromas translated to the palate as well but not at the beginning. I liked Jeff’s comments on the orange oil, and the finish went a bit bitter for me, almost like pith from the orange.

Brockway: The first thing that got me was Parmesan cheese rind. It’s not jasmine, but there is some kind of night flower mixed in with that. On the palate there is some oily texture that kind of dominates the flavor.

Virnig: Aromatically, it was sort of peachy, but there were a lot of yogurt dairy notes in there. It reminded me of orange sherbet. It was pretty astringent with rigid phenolics, and it finished abruptly. It was a little out of kilter, and I definitely felt the alcohol on this one.

Mathis: This is high ester with elder flower and elderberry. The tannin is too high. I like the acidity, and the alcohol doesn’t bother me in and of itself; but when coupled with the grit from the phenolics, it turns into an elbow in my ribs. I like the CO₂ level. The ester and CO₂ both remind me of the Sinskey, but it is less refined.

Bilbro: The fruits are stone fruit. This seems to have a controlled reductive quality. The whole wine feels very controlled and very “made.” It has richness, phenolics, fruit and candied fruit. It has all the pieces, but for me, they are not in balance. I think lots of people would like it, though.

Covenant Wines

2014 RED C ROSÉ (BLEND OF GRENACHE, SYRAH, ZINFANDEL, MERLOT AND A TOUCH OF CABERNET), 14.1% ALC., 150 CASES, \$40

Jeff Morgan is a winemaker, journalist and author of eight books. He fell in love with Rosé wines while living in southern France where he worked as a professional saxophone player. Returning to the United States, he made wine in New York and then moved to California to become West Coast editor of *Wine Spectator*. In 2000, he started **SoloRosa**, which made Rosé wine exclusively. Currently he is owner/winemaker for **Covenant Wines** in Berkeley.



According to Morgan:

“My goal is to produce a bright, fresh wine with subtle hints of red fruit and citrus that is light- to medium-bodied. I want it to be fresh, light and enjoyable.

“I primarily make big, red wines, and to that end the grapes are picked fully ripened, usually between 25° and 30° Brix. The thing is, I love Rosé wines. So wherever I can, I bleed off bits from my red wine production to make Rosé. This 2014 Red C Rosé is made with Zinfandel coming from Lodi, Grenache from **Kunde Vineyard** in Sonoma Valley, Syrah from Bennett Valley and Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley.

“Geology, rootstocks, clones, elevation and vine spacings vary. The Cabernet was organic; all the rest were traditionally farmed. All of these grapes were destemmed, received a 50 ppm SO₂ addition and moved to tanks. We bleed off the juice immediately, adjust the acid to .75 to .80, using tartaric acid, add water to end up with a finished wine under 14 percent alcohol. Because the juice is on the skins a minimal amount of time, I don’t think there is a lot of varietal influence.

“The different lots of wine are fermented separately in neutral oak barrels, using native yeast. We will add DAP and Fermaid where necessary. Fermentations take place at ambient temperature of the winery, probably around 68° F, and last three to four weeks. Once fermentation is finished, we add SO₂ and let the wine sit on the lees, with no stirring, topping once a month. I think this gives the wine a bit of richness.

“The wine is neither cold- nor heat-stabilized, but it is cross-flow and sterile-filtered. We usually age the wine for two months after bottling but will sell it sooner if we have a buyer.”



Tasting Notes

Morgan: It has a beautiful nose of light cherry and raspberry with a bit of citrus. There is nice red fruit on the palate backed up by some citrus, maybe grapefruit with a nice structured finish and a certain firmness on the end. I wish it was slightly brighter with higher acid.

Brocway: I get darker strawberry on the nose. I get pretty good acid. I don’t think it is lacking. It definitely has a richer, rounder mouthfeel, and the acid gives it a backbone. There is citrus, sort of like grapefruit rind that I like. It is a richer style.

Rorick: I would echo those descriptions, but in addition there is a nice interplay of fruit sweetness on the palate with the acid. It also opens up some flavors that I wouldn’t normally expect, like melon. It’s very nice.

Sass: I get a bit of pomegranate with some raspberry, but the pomegranate sticks out for me. It has lots of bright red fruit and weight with medium acid levels. I get a kind of jammy sweetness, like cobbler. It has a clean finish.

Brady: It smells sweet like brown sugar and plum, along with some citrus rind. It is medium weight in the mouth. It seems to be the sweetest wine of the day, but I like it.

Poe: The first thing that jumped out to me is a butter bread quality to it. There is berry, raspberry jam on the nose that definitely follows through on the palate. It is not as sweet as jam, but it is on the sweeter side. It is light-bodied but holds the middle palate nicely and lingers there a bit.

Bilbro: This is much riper than the others with soft candied, non-descript fruit. It is very clearly a saignée. It feels very sappy and rich on the mouth. It is not really my style of Rosé, but it is done well for the desired expression.

Virnig: Initially I get a dry straw character, and then the fruit is sort of like ripe watermelon. It is low acid with a longer finish. The finish is kind of flat for me. It’s why I don’t like saignée because you are picking for other things. I detect alcohol in the finish.

Mathis: I like the over-ripe watermelon, candied fruit character. It seems like a high residual sugar. It is too fleshy for me to be in the gulping category. In a black glass you might mistake this for a simple red wine.

Robert Hall Winery

2014 ROSÉ DE ROBLES (48% SYRAH, 39% GRENACHE, 6% CINSAULT, 4% COUNOISE, 3% MOURVEDRE), 14.5% ALC., 10,000 CASES, \$14

Don Brady took the job as winemaker for **Robert Hall Winery** in 2001. He had graduated from **Texas Tech University** in Lubbock in 1984 with a degree in horticulture. After college, Brady went to work for **Llano Estacado Winery** and helped put the Texas wine industry on the map. In 1991 he was awarded the **Louis F. Qualia Award** for outstanding contributions and leadership in the Texas wine industry. In 2006 Brady was recognized by the **Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance** as Winemaker of the Year.

According to Brady:

“We want to make a Rosé that is bright and fresh with racy fruit and light to medium weight, balanced by crisp acidity. We like some color, which we extract from Syrah, and we want a wine that is refreshing and appropriate to drink in our warm summer climate.



“Our vineyard is comprised of Terrace soils, moderately deep with fine loamy to clay soils with mixed rock. Elevation is 830 feet of gently rolling hills with East/West row orientation. We have various clones, but all are planted on 5C rootstock. The vineyard is traditionally farmed and drip-irrigated. We leaf-pull on the north side of the vines for all varieties except Syrah. Grenache was treated with Lalvigne, a yeast-derivative foliar spray which helps deliver brighter, more persistent aromas.

“With the large berry Rhône varieties, Grenache, Counoise, Cinsaut and Mourvedre, we begin with a large crop, as much as 10 tons per acre. At shoot-thinning, just after bloom, we drop the crop by about 40 percent to about 5.5 to 6 tons per acre, depending on cluster counts. Then just following veraison Rosé is made from about 1.5 to 2 tons per acre of the green harvest taken from over-exposed south-exposed fruit from these vineyard blocks. The balance of the block goes on to make red wine.

“The Syrah portion is harvested for color, so good color in the field is the determining factor. The balance of the fruit is not color-dependent and is usually harvested over multiple picks as we are able to schedule crews to work through the vineyard. The Syrah is machine harvested around 22.5° to 23.5° Brix. Then 75 ppm SO₂ is added as it goes to an axial feed press, and we use dry ice to purge the press of O₂. We use skin contact in the press until color is appropriate (about 24 to 36 hours). The other varieties are hand-picked and whole-cluster pressed with 50 ppm SO₂, using CO₂ blankets in the receiving tanks.

“After 24 to 48 hours of settling and less than 1 percent solids, the wine is racked for fermentation. We adjust pH to 3.4 to 3.5 using tartaric acid, not to exceed 7.0 g/L. We inoculate with prepared starter VL1 and use Go Ferm. We will add Fermaid K along with OptiWhite on the first day of active fermentation. Around 13° to 14° Brix we add Bio-Arom. We ferment at 57° F for the first 25 percent of fermentation. We adjust the temperature upward to 62° F for the next 50 percent and gradually raise temperatures to 64° F to completion. At the end of fermentation we will adjust acidity/pH as needed. Ten days after fermentation we add 70 ppm SO₂. After that, we chill the wine to 58° F and hold in tank.

“We usually achieve heat stability with 2 lbs./1,000 gals Bentonite and follow that with cold stabilization using chilling and seeding. We DE filter with white powder and bottle using ‘a bug catcher’ because we feel the wine shows better faster without severe filtration. We also bottle with 1,250 to 1,400 ppm of retained CO₂ because it helps retain freshness and it dissipates over time.”



Tasting Notes

Brady: This wine has color from the Syrah, and we like it that way. It is almost floral with violet aromatics and lots of raspberry and fruit. It has good weight in the mouth with just a bit of tannin to balance whatever sweetness is there and good acidity.

Poe: I like the bright pink color with a red hue. The first aromas I got were peach and pepper, some spice. It doesn't pop in the front palate. There is some nice soft fruit, a berry kind of thing. The mid-palate holds really well. It has more weight in the mid-palate, and it is well balanced, and it lingers on the finish longer.

Sass: I didn't pick up any CO₂. I got some Bing cherry in the nose, along with a kind of strawberries and cream, along with some mixed berry. The palate shows bright red fruits, along with some stone fruit like apricot and a touch of lime. The entry is really rich, and the acid is firm all the way through the wine. It is true to its color. It is big in color for a Rosé and big in texture.

Mathis: The color bugs me. The phenolics are too high for me, and there is a chalkiness. I don't get a lot of aroma character, but the ones that are there are pleasant cherry-type aromas but muted.

Bilbro: For \$14, sure. This wine lacks conviction about what it is trying to be. It is kind of big, but then it seems to be acidulated really hard. It tastes like it was pushed really hard. It doesn't seem pure. It is trying to please too many people.

Virnig: It didn't jump out initially, but for \$14 it's very good. I did get some strawberry and red fruit. There were dry tannins, and they finished bitter, but at this price, I'd buy it.

Rorick: The color is intense. Aromatically, there is an almond or vanilla character dancing around the edges of the nose that makes me think of oak, which I don't typically expect to find in a Rosé. It has rather forward acid, but the body of the wine is ponderous and clunky. It doesn't present seamlessly on the palate. Elements haven't come together yet. There is some unpleasant bitterness on the finish.

Brockway: The color influences your tasting notes. This kind of looks like a red fruit popsicle. This looks like a Jolly Rancher with some higher tones of red fruit. I get some marzipan. There is definitely a hole in the palate. It isn't quite complete.

Morgan: The flavor components in this wine are almost irrelevant. It is not offensive but is devoid of character. It is a little flabby. It is more like a light red wine.

Data Sheet: *Rosé*

WINERY	Broc Cellars	Forlorn Hope	Robert Sinskey Vineyards
Wine	2014 Brock Cellars White Zinfandel	2013 Kumo To Ame Rosé	2014 Vin Gris of Pinot Noir
Blend	100% Zinfandel	50% Touriga Nacional, 30% Tinta Roriz, 15% Tinta Cao, 5% Trincadeira	100% Pinot Noir
Winemaker	Chris Brockway	Matthew Rorick	Jeff Virnig
Style Goals	Dry Rosé	Texturally driven, direct to press, intended to showcase site over variety	Looking for crisp, clean, refreshingly dry palate with floral and strawberry notes
AVA	Sonoma County	Amador County	Los Carneros Napa Valley/Sonoma
Vineyard	Arrowhead Mountain Vineyard and Buck Hill Vineyard	DeWitt Vineyard	OSR, 3 Amigos, Scintilla Sonoma
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant Geology (Soil Type)	Sand/sandy loam	Josephine series: decomposed granite, quartz, volcanic	Mostly clay loam: Brissa dribble, Hare Loam, Maxwell series clays
Elevation	Above 1,000 feet	1,300 feet	Barely above sea level
Vine Spacing	Mixed	6x8 feet	Varied; 6x4 feet, 8x4 feet, 8x5 feet
Rootstock	Mixed	1103P	101-14, 5BB, 1103P
Exposure	Mixed	West, Southwest	East/West exposure with one North/West exposure
Clones	Mixed	N/A	114 Dijon, Pommard clone 4, S-Selection (heirloom) INRA 459
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigated	Irrigated	Drip irrigation
Farming (Organic, Biodynamic, Traditional)	Non-certified organic	Traditional	100% certified organically grown; Biodynamically farmed (not certified)
Production	Averages 4+ tons per acre	6 tons per acre	3 tons per acre
Vineyard Practices	Use no sulfur in vineyard; some minimal leaf pulling	Suckering only, no leaf pulling or fruit thinning	Try to achieve balanced vine architecture by dropping fruit and pulling leaves as needed
WINEMAKING DATA			
When to Pick	Pick below 21° Brix.	Monitor Brix (upper limit 19.5°) and pH (aiming for 3.1 to 3.3) in conjunction with overall fruit and canopy condition	Grapes are sampled for taste, flavor, seed hardness, TA, pH and Brix; also follow Antipodean Astro Calendar (BD); try to dovetail fruit and flower days with harvest parameters
SO₂	Four weeks before bottling	40 ppm at reception; adjust to about 30 ppm free SO ₂ post ferment	30 ppm free SO ₂ at bottling
Crush Format	No sorting, destemmed and pressed	Pressed whole cluster with no sorting	Night picked, 100% whole cluster pressed
Settle	8 hours ambient settle	Settled overnight at 50° F	72 hours at 40° F
Yeast	Native	Native	QA-23, M-2
Fermentation Temperature	70° F	60° F in tank, mid-70s in barrel	58° F to 61° F
Fermentation Technique	None	None	None
Nutrients	None	None	As needed
Acid Addition	None	None	As needed, strive for finished wine at 6.2 to 6.4 g/L
Tank Types	Stainless steel	Half in stainless steel, half in neutral barrels	Stainless steel
Racking	None	Racked once post fermentation and again pre-bottle	Rack once a few weeks after fermentation ends and again for final blend
Cold Stability	42° F for two weeks	None	Chill tanks 2 to 3 weeks dependent on K+ concentration product trials
Heat Stability	None	None	2 lbs/1,000 gal bentonite to < 1NTU
Cork or Screw caps	Cork	Cork, because I have no screw cap equipment yet	Best luck with Diam 3; no off-character or cork taint
Bottle-aging	3 weeks	8 months	3 months
Filtration	.45 micron	None	Cross-flow

Data Sheet: *Rosé*

WINERY	Idlewild Wines	Mathis Wine	Halter Ranch
Wine	2014 "The Flower" Flora & Fauna Rosé	2014 Mathis Rosé de Granache	2014 Rosé
Blend	Nebbiolo, Dolcetto and Barbera, about one-third of each	100% Grenache	73% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvedre, 7% Picpoul Blanc
Winemaker	Sam Bilbro	Peter Mathis	Kevin Sass
Style Goals	Want to make a light, vibrant fresh wine with significant structure and balance	Provençal Rosé is model: light, dry, refreshing with low alcohol, tannin and bitterness. Light in color with a salmon hue	Express the varieties with an easy drinking, low alcohol wine. Should have bright fruit, good weight and natural acidity that is maintained from beginning to end
AVA	Mendocino County	Sonoma Valley	Paso Robles
Vineyard	Fox Hill Vineyard	Mathis Vineyard	Halter Ranch Vineyard
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant Geology (Soil Type)	Gravelly, sandy clay loam (Redvine)	Volcanic, basalt and tuff	Calcareous clay loam
Elevation	700 feet	300 feet	1,600 feet
Vine Spacing	6x9 feet	6x4.5 feet	8x6 feet
Rootstock	Unknown	St. George	1103 P
Exposure	West, Northwest	South	South-facing hillside
Clones	Unknown	513, 515	Tablas Creek, Alban
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Lightly irrigated	Irrigation	Some irrigated, some dry-farmed
Farming (Organic, Biodynamic, Traditional)	Traditional	Traditional	SIP Certified
Production	3 to 4 tons per acre	4 tons per acre	3 tons per acre
Vineyard Practices	Minimal: early suckering, mowing, disking; Minimal spraying, no fruit drop or leaf pulling in normal years	Some thinning on weaker vines, but not much for vines designated for Rosé; some leaf pulling	Shoot thinning, suckering, light lateral removal
WINEMAKING DATA			
When to Pick	Taste first and foremost, then acid, then Brix	Taste	Based on analysis and tasting; sugar and acid levels primary determination; tasting determines cold soak length with tannin shortening time.
SO₂	30 ppm addition going to barrel plus 10 ppm adjustment at bottling	35 ppm at press	20 ppm into cold soak bins
Crush Format	Whole cluster pressed	Field sorted and whole cluster pressed	All fruit is destemmed and sorted; crush fruit to half-ton macro bins for 24- to 48-hour cold soak in cold room dependent on tannin
Settle	No settling	Settled 2 days at 50° F and fined with Polyact pre-fermentation	2 day settle at 52° F
Yeast	Native	Zymaflore X5	Vin 13
Fermentation Temperature	Peaked at high 70s for a couple of days	55° F	Start at 58° F and work down to 52° F
Fermentation Technique	Ambient temperatures; Move to sun to bring up warmth through finishing	None	O ₂ addition 2 days after yeast inoculation
Nutrients	Fermaid O post lag and again halfway on one lot	Varies, added pre-fermentation	Made at 1/3 fermentation as needed
Acid Addition	None	DAP and Bioferm at 21° Brix	None needed; we pick early and use Picpoul Blanc to fine tune
Tank Types	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Racking	None	Once post fermentation, again post cold stabilization	Leave on gross lees until a bit stinky, then rack clean
Cold Stability	None	Yes	CMC
Heat Stability	None	Yes	Bentonite
Cork or Screw caps	Cork	Cork	Screw caps to preserve freshness of wine and prevent oxidation of color
Bottle-aging	1 month	1 month	4 to 6 weeks, based on weekly tasting
Filtration	Cross-flow	Sterile	Cross-flow

Data Sheet: *Rosé*

WINERY	Covenant Wines	Robert Hall Winery	Tobin James Cellars
Wine	2014 Red C Rosé	2014 Rosé de Robles	2013 Syrah Rosé
Blend	Zinfandel, Grenache, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon	48% Syrah, 39% Grenache, 6% Cinsault, 4% Counoise, 3% Mourvedre	100% Syrah
Winemaker	Jeff Morgan	Don Brady	Jeff Poe
Style Goals	A bright, fresh wine with subtle hints of red fruit and citrus that is light- to medium-bodied and refreshing to drink	Fresh and bright with racy fruit, light-medium weight balanced by crisp acidity	Predominant fruity aromas and flavors coupled with lighter color, medium body and smooth clean finish. Wanted crisp, dry, distinctive Rosé
AVA	Various	Paso Robles	Paso Robles
Vineyard	Various	Hall Ranch	Undisclosed westside vineyard
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant Geology (Soil Type)	Various	Terrace soils, moderately deep and well drained. Loamy to clay soils with mixed rock	Cropley Clay
Elevation	Various	830 feet	1,500 feet
Vine Spacing	Various	Half 11x7 feet, balance 10x6 feet	High density unilateral cordon 6x5 feet
Rootstock	Various	5C	5C
Exposure	Various	Gently rolling hills with East/West row orientation	North-South vine rows; slight North-facing slope
Clones	Various	Various	Estrella clone
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigated	Drip irrigated	Irrigated
Farming (Organic, Biodynamic, Traditional)	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional
Production	3 to 5 tons per acre	5 tons per acre	4 tons per acre
Vineyard Practices	Various	Leaf pull North side except Syrah; Grenache treated with Lalvigne a yeast-derivative foliar spray to get brighter, more persistent aromas	VSP pruned in Feb. (basil+2); thinned twice, two sahoots per shoot position; East side of vine row leaf pulled to expose fruit; fruit drop at veraison
WINEMAKING DATA			
When to Pick	Picking grapes for red wine usually between 25° and 30° Brix	Syrah harvested for color depending on availability of presses. Balance of fruit harvested over multiple picks	Visual inspection, taste, acid levels (5.5 g/L), pH (3.50) and 23° to 25° Brix
SO₂	50 ppm at crusher, bottle at 38 ppm	50 ppm while crushing, 70 ppm 10 days post fermentation	20 ppm at crushpad
Crush Format	Destem and move whole berries to tank	Vin Gris portion whole cluster pressed; Syrah is destemmed and saignée after 24 to 36 hours; CO ₂ blanket or dry ice used	Minimal sorting, destem, crush top press
Settle	Bleed juice quickly to barrels; add water to bring finished alcohol below 14%	Settle 24 to 48 hours	24 hours at 45° F
Yeast	Native	VL 1	Cote de Blanc
Fermentation Temperature	Cellar temperature	57° F first 25% of fermentation 62° F for next 50%. Finish at 64° F, hold at 58° F post fermentation	55° F to 60° F
Fermentation Technique	None	N/A	Hold cold temp
Nutrients	Fermaid K and DAP	Fermaid and OptiWhite at end of lag phase; Bio-Arom at 1/3 fermentation	DAP to 250 ppm, Superfood (2lb per 1,000gal) all in tank after initial racking
Acid Addition	Add tartaric acid to bring TA to .75 to .80	Adjust pH to 3.4 to 3.5 w/tartaric acid	At crush to 6.0 g/L, further additions based on lab trials
Tank Types	Neutral barrels	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Racking	None	Rack following fermentation and 10-day hold; after heat and cold stability	After settling, after primary fermentation, at one month and at three months
Cold Stability	None	Chilled and seeded following heat stability	Chilled in tanks
Heat Stability	None	Bentonite	Bentonite
Cork or Screw caps	Cork	Cork	Cork
Bottle-aging	10 weeks	None	Less than 2 months
Filtration	Cross-flow, then sterile filter	White powder with turbidity; 1.0 at bottling	Sterile



Tobin James Cellars

2013 PARADISE SYRAH ROSÉ (100% SYRAH), 14.2% ALC., 800 CASES, \$16

Jeff Poe began his wine career in 1987, working harvest at **Clos Du Bois**. After a second harvest at **Seghesio Winery** and a year as a lab technician at **Simi Winery**, he decided to pursue winemaking as a career. He completed his degree at **Fresno State** in 1993, found employment as an associate winemaker at **Lockwood Vineyards** in southern Monterey County and moved to Paso Robles. In March 2001, he assumed the position of head winemaker at **Tobin James Cellars** in Paso Robles, California.

According to Poe:

“We wanted to create a Rosé that was fresh, clean and bright in the Tobin James style. The wine should be fruit-forward with weight on the palate. We wanted to show the distinctiveness of the Syrah grape with a bigger profile, sort of a Rosé with the style and weight of good Chardonnay.

“The Syrah for this Rosé grows at 1,500 feet on Cropley clay soils. It is planted in high density, unilateral cordons with 6x5 foot spacings. Vine rows run north/south on a slight north-facing slope. The vineyard is traditionally farmed, has irrigation and vines on Estrella clone planted on 5C rootstock. Vines are VSP-pruned in February and typically shoot-thinned twice to two shoots per position. The east side of vine rows is leaf-pulled to expose fruit, and there is a fruit drop at veraison. Harvest usually runs 4 tons per acre.

“We determine when to pick by taste and visuals, while shooting for reasonable alcohols but wanting ripe fruit with good varietal character. Typically, we pick between 23° and 25° Brix with pH around 3.5 and TA above 5.5 g/L.

“We pick into half-ton bins in the morning with minimal sorting done in the field. Grapes are destemmed, crushed and pumped directly to the press after receiving 20 ppm SO₂ and acid additions to 6.0 g/L. We make cuts and have three separate press fractions, which we settle for 24 hours at 45° F. We will rack the juice, blending the press fractions into stainless steel tanks. The juice is warmed up to 60° F, and Côte de Blanc yeast is added. We will add DAP and Superfood. The wine ferments at 55° F to 60° F until it gets to 3° Brix, at which time we turn off the cooling, allowing it to ferment dry.

“From there it gets 15 to 20 ppm SO₂ and is racked to neutral barrels. We will rack after one month and again after three months. The wine is cold-stabilized and heat-stabilized. Then it is cross-flow and sterile-filtered. It receives two months’ bottle age before release.”



Tasting Notes

Poe: The color is an off-pink, sort of a medium watermelon color. The nose is a strawberry bomb with a lot of fruit. You get the fruit right on the front palate, and the Chardonnay-like structure allows it to hold mid-palate. The fruit pulls through all the way to the back end and lingers on to a light finish.

Sass: I get a bit of raspberry cheesecake character to it. There is a sort of graham cracker thing coming on from the barrels that is intriguing. I can see how people would really like this if they are into bigger, richer Rosé. There is a touch of apple juice character in the nose. It has a ton of weight on the palate and a really rich mouthfeel. There is very firm acid all the way through. It is a Rosé that looks to the Chardonnay kind of weight and complexity.

Brady: It has good pink salmon color. Aromatically, it is like pineapples foster. I get that same graham cracker spiciness. In the mouth it is big, round and full but still has good acidity. It has a great finish and lots of length. As rich and ripe as it is, there is an elegance here.

Rorick: Aromatically, there is something going on that makes me think it is not all Syrah. There seems to be some heavy toast new oak. It is far from what I would typically look for in Rosé. It is thick and viscous, tastes hot. Stylistically, I think this is what they were going for, and they nailed it, but it is not what I look for in Rosé.

Morgan: Mostly I get a burned rubber character from this wine. This is a painful wine. It makes me angry because it is not at all what I expect in a Rosé.

Brockway: This has an older quality. It drinks like a red wine. This doesn’t drink like a Rosé to me. There is no life to it and not enough acid. It is slightly maderized as well.

Bilbro: It isn’t my style of Rosé, but it is made for who they are. I personally would prefer a wine that was picked much earlier, but I think there is a sense of conviction in this wine. It is like meaty Syrah, sweet and flat. If you don’t like acid and don’t like light fruit, but you want something that is fun and easy, this hits those notes. I can see why people like this.

Mathis: It is too flabby for me. The alcohol is overblown relative to the acid. Way too high phenolic extraction for my taste, by far the highest of all these wines. There is also a salty character to this wine.

Virnig: For as ripe as it is, I thought it was pretty green and herbaceous and pushing green tannins. It’s almost like this was pressed really hard until seed tannins were pressed out. The acidity comes from the tannin, and it is salty, so maybe it would be awesome with oysters.

Varietal Focus: *Rosé*



THIS VARIETAL FOCUS ON Rosé featured a wide range of styles and methodologies. Some of the winemakers chose to pick grapes at very low sugars, preserving high acidity and guaranteeing low pH. Others preferred their grapes a bit riper, hoping for fuller flavors and more texture in the palate. A group of winemakers insisted that single varietal Rosé was the way to go while others disagreed, feeling that blends of grapes gave more depth and complexity.

Winemakers handled the grapes in every way imaginable. They whole-cluster pressed, cold-soaked and then pressed, and saignéed from fermenting red wine tanks. Some maintained a minimalist technique using native yeast, no acid additions and no nutrient additions. Others destemmed, added acid, nutrients and fining agents. Most winemakers insisted on settling their juice before fermentation, but others insisted on keeping solids in the mix. Some put their wines through malolactic fermentation while others prevented it. Wines were fermented in everything from stainless steel and plastic tanks to neutral barrels and concrete. Many of these winemakers are very experienced and have been making wine for decades while others represent a new wave, using cutting-edge techniques.

The one thing all of these Rosé producers seemed to share in common was that making Rosé allowed them to use grapes or techniques that might not have led to great red wine. Some winemakers made this decision in the vineyard. Those parts of the vineyard where there was too much water,

too much vigor, shaded rows or weak soils, were designated for the Rosé program. Grapes that didn't color up, crop loads that were too heavy or areas of vineyard that had plump berries with higher pulp to skin ratios were diverted into Rosé programs.

This is not to suggest that these winemakers used inferior grapes to make their Rosés. Instead, they sought out ways to maximize the components that contributed to the specific styles they were intending to produce. Forlorn Hope and Broc Cellars harvested low-Brix, high-acid grapes and produced wines at 11.3 and 11.5 percent alcohol, respectively. Covenant Red C was saignéed from ripe red grapes and finished at 14.1 percent alcohol while Tobin James harvested ripe Syrah and turned out a Rosé of 14.2 percent alcohol.

As we have stated, the nine wines in this Varietal Focus display a wide range of styles. We liked all of them for different reasons. It leads us to agree with the producers that Rosés are very versatile wines and go well with a wide variety of foods. Whether it is because winemakers can purchase grapes at lower prices or because they rarely use new oak barrels, their Rosés are very reasonably priced. Rosés have the added advantage for the winery of being bottled early and put on the market quickly, which provides some much needed cash early in the year. Because they are fresh, crisp and early to market, Rosés are the perfect wines to drink in spring and summer. **WBM**



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