

# Rosé keeps on improving

Words by Paul Taggart



**W**hen we tasted rosé for the summer issue last year, we posed the question: are wine people taking rosé seriously yet?

The answer was that they were certainly taking it a lot more seriously than they were a few years ago. On that occasion we ended up with one five star wine — the “electric pink” Rua from Central Otago’s amazingly successful Akarua winery.

This time, with the same three judges and their usual tough marking, there were three five star wines; plus a few of the four stars were knocking on the door wanting to be up there too.

Our Master of Wine, Simon Nash, said after the tasting that the rosé class was so much better than even two or three years ago.

“People have lifted the bar here,” he said. People are taking it seriously.”

Ant Mackenzie added, “And people are drinking a lot of it.”

When I caught up with Tim Turvey, one of the legends of the Hawke’s Bay wine industry and the producer of the country’s most expensive chardonnay, he confided that his fantastic rosé, made with Chambourcin grapes, is his most popular line.

The strongly coloured wine has a cult following in the Bay and not without good reason — it was a four star winner in our

tasting and quite a hit with the judges.

There are several ways to produce rosé. In the past, much of it was a result of saignée — the result of winemakers seeking to impart more colour to a red wine, therefore bleeding off some of the pink juice, which was then used to make rosé. It was, therefore, basically an industrial byproduct.

However, with most modern top rosés — such as Clearview’s Black Reef Blush — the grapes are specifically produced for rosé production. A wide variety of grapes are used in making rosé, and that is one of the interesting aspects. It can be made from mainstream French red grapes through to exotic Italian and Spanish varieties.

Consistency is one of the hallmarks of the WineNZ tasting team — and several times they have picked out the same wine or same winery and recorded almost identical remarks and scores. On this occasion Rua was again a five star wine, with an identical mark to last year.

However, two other wineries also climbed on to the rostrum this time — including Palliser, from Martinborough, with its lovely baby pink offering, which went straight to the top spot.

Barry Riwai, who led the rosé tasting, said that while many of the good wines had strawberry notes, the Palliser wine was more raspberry, setting it apart as something special. It also had lovely aromatics and balance, added Ant. It is quite pricey for rosé at \$48.50, but

this is a special occasion wine — Christmas is coming — and five stars aren’t easy to get, so it is worth every penny.

Palliser’s winemaker, Allan Johnson, who has been making wine at the long-established Martinborough winery for the past 26 years says this is only the third year they’ve made a rosé and he’s very pleased with it. He said the price reflects the quality, but also the production costs, as it is made with 100 per cent pinot noir grapes, which are lightly pressed, so the yield is reasonably light.

He said he aims to make a delicate style wine, with good fruit aromas and flavours, in a balanced rosé style. Our judges certainly thought he had hit the mark.

The Rua, on the other hand, was a full, rich variety, with the sweatiness (in a good way) noted last year too by Simon Nash.

It was pretty, creamy with strawberry notes, added Ant, while Barry noted juicy watermelon, musk and great structure and length.

The third five-star wine came from Invivo - Graham Norton’s Own “Pink by Design” Marlborough Rosé 2016, in its first year of production. The wine recently won a top award at the Sydney International Wine Competition.

Pink by Design is produced from pinot noir and pinot gris grapes grown in Marlborough and Hawke’s Bay. Its \$18.99 price resulted in it being one of the top value wines in the tasting.