



TEXT
MATTHEW STOWELL

SUMMER

I N A

BOTTLE

NOTHING SINGS THE SUNNY JOYS OF SPRING AND SUMMER LIKE A GLASS OF CHILLED ROSÉ, AND OVER THE PAST DECADE, CYPRUS ROSÉ HAS JUSTIFIABLY MOVED FROM THE BEACH BONFIRE TO THE FORMAL DINING ROOM.

A bright, ice-cool bottle of rosé has the magical ability to make us feel instantly happy. The variable pink hue of rosé brings to mind the lush beauties of a rose garden, the childhood joys of candied apples and spun sugar treats, the special glow of sunsets over the sea. It enhances the colours and tastes of summer fruits – figs, strawberries, pomegranates and fresh-cut watermelon. Rosé's ability to bring light-heartedness and simple joy to any occasion makes it the perfect wine to indulge in on holiday, and the winemakers of Cyprus are creating some of the best rosés in Europe right now, winning international awards and helping to grow the island's oenological reputation.

THE BEST OF COMPANIONS

Much like Champagne, rosé is a versatile wine when it comes to pairing with food. It will always drink well with Asian cuisine, among many others. Most well-made rosés, with a modicum of tannin and sufficient acidity, will also prove fine accompaniment to seafood of all types, carpaccios (fish or meat), salads, pasta dishes, pizza, burgers as well as fruit and cheese platters. Logic and instinct tell us that the cuisine of a country is best enjoyed with wine from the local vineyards. Cyprus rosé is deliberately built to match the qualities

of the Cyprus kitchen, which has been influenced by virtually all the cultures surrounding the Eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor). A fine rosé made from grapes cultivated under a Paphos, Limassol or Nicosia district sun will succeed as a most reliable companion to a typically savoury Cyprus meze.

THE SKYROCKET RISE OF ROSÉ

Following the debacle of the White Zinfandel and Blush craze of America, which gave rosé a bad name among serious wine drinkers, the pink-hued quaff has been justly restored to its lofty position as one of the most satisfying and pleasant wines to enjoy, with or without food. In fact, worldwide, the best-selling French wine is not a Bordeaux or Burgundy but a Provençal rosé called Whispering Angel (see our wine menu). Made from Grenache, Rolle, Cinsault, Syrah and Mourvedre, it is the number one rosé sold in America, the world's largest wine market. Rosé production in France, Spain and in some parts of Italy is at its peak, topping sales of all other types of wines released. According to Alissa Tosoudi, the hotel's Head Sommelier, the most popular wine in Cyprus is now a rosé: the well-constructed, medium sweet Valentina from Fikardos winery in Paphos.

CYPRUS ROSÉ COMES INTO ITS OWN

Ever since Akis and Marcos Zambartas released their first rosé in 2006 (in fact their first wine ever), rosé production has more than tripled on the island. There were a few other Cypriot winemakers producing rosés, but the phenomenal success of Zambartas (each vintage consistently sold out before the end of the season) was the wake-up call for winemakers and wine aficionados all over the island. At the time, a handful of other Cyprus vintners were making a rosé, but the Zambartas creation not only raised the quality bar considerably, it also was a reminder of the many benefits of the salmon-coloured wine. Today it would be unthinkable for a Cyprus winemaker's repertoire not to include a rosé, with the result that all of the island's rosés are improving with each vintage.

Many still consider the Zambartas rosé the best in the country – it recently won a gold medal at the prestigious International Rosé Championship, besting hundreds of rosés from around the world – but others cite Kyperounda's Akti, Tsiakkas' Rodinos, Aes Ambelis' Rosé, Santa Irene's Theoni, or the Grifos 3 from Vlassides as their favourite and equally worthy of the top honour.

DON'T JUDGE A ROSÉ BY ITS COLOUR

Colour is not a reliable indicator of taste or quality when choosing a rosé. Some classicists are wary of trying Cyprus' generally darker rosés, dismissing them out of hand because they are not as pale as their Provencal cousins; but this is a silly

bias. The particular tint in rosé depends on the skin colour of the grape used and how long those skins were in contact with the juice during maceration. The juice of all grapes (white, pink, red or black) is basically clear or colourless. A very pale rosé might have a wallop of an impact on the palate, whereas a dark rosé can be gentle, even illusory in its overall mouthfeel. Wine historians claim that six thousand years ago in Cyprus, Georgia and Iran, the first wines produced were rosés (or gris), because the grapes were pressed and the juice fermented after only the barest contact with the skins. It took many years of experimentation for winemakers to figure out the best ways to produce the red wine we know today.

PERFECTION IS IN THE DETAILS

Because of the chemical processes that are absent when skin contact is short, most rosés should be drunk within a year of bottling, although some have been known to be highly drinkable up to age 30.

Rosé can be created from virtually any red grape, so if you are partial to Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon or Tempranillo, look for rosés made from those varieties. In Cyprus, excellent rosés are being made from all of the above, plus Lefkada, Maratheftiko and Mavro. And let's not forget, rosé shares the health benefits of red wine, so the next time you sit down to lunch or dinner, or just an evening snack, consider choosing a cool, refreshing rosé, which can encompass all the best qualities of white and red wine in a single bottle.



THE MEDITERRANEAN BREATHES LIFE INTO THE ROSÉS OF CYPRUS

Here are four Cyprus rosés from our wine menu that are all produced in the district of Limassol, which means their wineries are in easy driving distance for a visit.

(ALWAYS CALL AHEAD, OR CHECK WITH THE HOTEL'S CONCIERGE.)

Akti is the place where the sea meets the land, where Greece, by way of its Lefkada grape, meets Cyprus and the rich, dark qualities of its indigenous Mavro varietal. Minas Mina of Kyperounda Winery has fashioned an extremely smooth, refreshing rosé of great character and substance. It has a velvety, very feminine consistency which melds with and brilliantly embellishes any dish placed in front of it.

Theoni, the rosé from Daniel Anastasis at Santa Irene Winery in Farmakas, is made entirely from the Mavro grape, which is a fine achievement in itself, and is as ballet-slipper pink as the Akti and most French rosés, but is more fruit forward, with many subtle but deeply impressive characteristics that combine to make it an excellent match for traditional Cyprus cuisine.

The **Zambartas** rosé, created by Marcos Zambartas of Lefkada and Cabernet Franc – an elegant black grape from France – is the bold one here, darker than most and with lots of spice in the nose, which may come as a pleasant surprise. Its fruit is very much present but not tart or in any way overbearing. It is a finely made, sophisticated wine with a complex aftertaste that intrigues as well as satisfies.

If you prefer your rosé sweet, the **Hadjiantonas**, tinted with the colour of ripe pomegranate, is a wise choice. It will pair well with most fish and meat dishes but it truly shines when tasted with a fresh fruit desert. You'll be amazed when you take a sip of this well-constructed rosé – immediately after a mouthful of dessert – as the sweetness of the wine is superseded by the well-rounded tannins of the Cabernet Sauvignon grape from which it's made.

