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Rosé wine production surges worldwide as diverse styles and grape varieties drive global demand

France, Spain, and the United States lead a growing market, with production methods shaping flavors and consumer preferences across regions

Wednesday, April 30, 2025



Rosé wine has seen a remarkable rise in popularity over the past decade, moving from a niche product to a staple in wine selections around the world. According to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), global production of rosé now stands at 2.3 billion liters annually, representing about 9% of total wine output. France leads the market with 805 million liters, nearly half of which comes from Provence, a region now synonymous with pale, elegant rosés. Spain follows with 460 million liters, while the United States produces 230 million liters, much of it driven by the domestic demand for White Zinfandel. Italy, South Africa, Germany, and Chile also contribute significant volumes, reflecting rosé's broad international appeal.

The diversity of rosé wines can be traced back to both production methods and grape varieties. Most rosés are made exclusively from red (or blue) grapes, though exceptions exist. For example, in Champagne, a small amount of red wine may be blended in at the end to create rosé Champagne. In Germany, Rotling is produced by blending white and red grapes before fermentation, but these wines are not officially classified as rosé.

Three main production methods define the style and character of rosé wines: direct pressing, maceration, and the Saignée method. Direct pressing is the most common technique worldwide. In this process, red grapes are pressed immediately after harvest and the juice is fermented without extended contact with the skins. The resulting wines are typically pale in color and subtle in flavor. The speed and pressure of pressing can vary depending on grape variety; for instance, Pinot Noir's thin skins require gentle handling to achieve a delicate hue, while thicker-skinned varieties like Mourvèdre can be pressed more quickly if a lighter color is desired. Provence has set the standard for this style, producing almost all its rosés through direct pressing.

Maceration involves crushing grapes to create a mash that includes juice, skins, seeds, and sometimes stems. The mixture is left to soak for anywhere from a few minutes to several days. This allows more color and flavor compounds to be extracted from the skins and other solid parts of the grape. The length of maceration depends on the grape variety and desired style; thicker-skinned grapes can withstand longer periods without becoming overly tannic or bitter. Rosés made by maceration tend to be deeper in color and more robust in flavor than those made by direct pressing. Spanish and Italian rosados often use this method.

The Saignée method is unique in that it produces rosé as a byproduct of red wine production. During maceration for red wine, some juice is “bled off” early in the process to concentrate the remaining must for red wine fermentation. The separated juice is then fermented as rosé. Saignée rosés are usually fuller-bodied and richer than those made specifically for rosé production because the grapes are harvested at optimal ripeness for red wine rather than for higher acidity or freshness typical of dedicated rosé styles.

Grape variety plays a crucial role in shaping the final character of a rosé wine. In France’s Provence region, blends often include Cinsault—known for its aromatic profile with notes of blackberry and herbs—and Mourvèdre, which adds color and flavors of dark fruit and dried herbs. Syrah brings cherry and strawberry notes with hints of black pepper when macerated longer. Grenache contributes lively acidity and flavors reminiscent of hibiscus and strawberry; it is also widely used in Spain under its local name Garnacha.

Spanish rosados frequently feature Tempranillo, which imparts bold flavors of strawberry and herbs with a rustic edge that pairs well with food. In Italy, Sangiovese dominates many rosatos with its bright acidity and cherry-plum notes, while Primitivo-based wines from southern regions offer ripe raspberry and black cherry flavors with lower acidity—making them popular among casual drinkers.

Pinot Noir presents challenges as a blending partner due to its subtlety but shines as a single-varietal rosé with delicate raspberry and strawberry aromas and very pale color.

The global range of grape varieties used for rosé ensures an impressive diversity in style—from mineral-driven and elegant to fruity and approachable—allowing retailers to cater to many different preferences across various price points.

As consumer interest continues to grow, understanding these production methods and grape characteristics helps both professionals and enthusiasts navigate an increasingly complex market. With so many options available today, there is likely a rosé style suited for every palate and occasion.