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## ON WINE

# Why Last Year's Rosés Are Your Best Bet for Drinking Now

Blame it on the supply chain: The rosé vintage we would normally be uncorking now will arrive late. But last year's excellent vintage has only gotten better, and you can (and should) still find the bottles on wine store shelves.



**OF THE MOMENT** It's time to drink last year's rosés—this spring's best buy.

ILLUSTRATION: ELIOT WYATT



By

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**MANY WINES** may sit on store shelves for 12 months or longer. But rosés are marketed as seasonal wines, with the new vintage traditionally replacing the old. For retailers, last year's rosés are yesterday's news—except this year, it seems.

Since the rosés from the 2021 harvest will be arriving much more slowly this spring, and there are plenty of last spring's—i.e., 2020's—pinks still around, I decided to sample some of these “leftover” wines. Could they be just as good or perhaps even better than they were last year?

First, some context: The arrival of the 2021 rosés has been hampered by many of the same supply-chain issues that affected the world last fall. (I covered this in my [Oct. 22, 2021, column](#).) These issues have only grown worse with the ever-escalating shipping prices and cost of goods, according to the wine importers and wholesalers I spoke with this month.

New York-based David Bowler, founder of an eponymous wine import and distribution company, broke the situation down for me geographically. The “cheap and cheerful” rosatos from his Italian producers are a month behind schedule, he said. Mr. Bowler expects most of the Italian rosatos and French rosés to arrive sometime later in April and in May; his Spanish producers' rosados started to reach wine store shelves, though two of his producers' rosados won't arrive until later in the summer.

## **This spring's rosés could cost anywhere from 5% to 25% more thanks to the increased cost of production.**

Mark Fornatale, Italian portfolio manager for Skurnik Wines & Spirits, a New York-based importer and distributor, said his producers' problems have been wide-ranging. There is the issue of shortages—from paper (for wine labels and wine cartons) to aluminum (bottle capsules) to glass (the bottles themselves). “I was told yesterday that one of the big producers of glass in Europe is in Ukraine. *Figurati*, as the Italians would say,” he wrote in an email, invoking an Italian expression with many meanings—in this case something like “Go figure.” As a result, some producers whose wines are imported by Skurnik might not get their rosés to the U.S. market until June.

There will be price increases on those wines, as well, Mr. Fornatale noted—a point echoed by every other wine professional I spoke with. Mr. Fornatale estimated that the 2021 rosés could cost anywhere from 5% to 25% more than the 2020 wines thanks to the increased cost of production. The 2021 rosé season was a difficult one in many regions. For example, the wildfires in Provence in August of last year destroyed winery buildings and vineyards of grapes yet to be harvested.

Rocco Lombardo, president of the Napa-based wine marketer Wilson Daniels, was one of the few importers I spoke with for this column whose 2021 Provence rosés have arrived stateside. He expected them to be in stores by mid-April. “We sell 75% of our rosés between April and September,” he told me in a phone call. Still, Mr. Lombardo decried the idea that rosé is a “seasonal” wine, to be consumed only at a specific time of year. It makes no more sense to him than the idea that sparkling wine should be consumed only for a celebration.

A complex rosé from Provence has the ability to age, Mr. Lombardo contended. His company is actually creating a library of rosé back-vintages in magnums. “These wines have complexity, and they’re great food wines,” he said.

Gina Trippi, co-owner of Metro Wines in Asheville, N.C., actually held back certain 2020 rosés to sell now, rather than last spring, because she prefers certain wines with a bit of age. This vintage is indeed even better now than when it was released, she reported. Do her customers notice or care if a rosé she recommends is from “last year’s” vintage? “If it’s a bottle they know and like, the year doesn’t matter,” she said.

I found a huge number of 2020 rosés on the shelves of Total Wine & More in West Orange, N.J. I asked a sales associate stacking boxes if customers notice that they are last year’s wines. She assured me that they don’t notice or care. “The wines are still good,” she said.

She was right about the rosés I bought from Total that day. The terrific 2020 Peyrassol Cuvée des Commandeurs Côtes de Provence (\$27) from Provence was not just good but downright delicious. There wasn’t anything “leftover” about its floral aromas and bright acidity. The same was true of two other rosés I had somehow overlooked last year but happily purchased this month: a light and lively 2020 Aix Coteaux d’Aix En Provence (\$16) and the truly gorgeous 2020 Domaine Tempier Bandol (\$38), which has long been considered one of the best rosés in the world. Anthony Lynch, sourcing manager and content director at Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, the longtime importer of Domaine Tempier, noted that the Bandol rosés his company buys typically ship later than most other rosés “so that they arrive in their very prime.”

I found a few wines I’d purchased in multiples last year and was happy to buy again now. They included a soft and exceedingly pleasant 2020 Muga Rioja (\$13) from a highly regarded estate. It was even a dollar cheaper now than it was when I bought it last year. (One retailer told me he was discounting his 2020 rosés to move them off the shelves.) Another wine I drank last year and found discounted now by a dollar: the 2020 La

Spinetta Il Rosé Di Casanova (\$13). It was every bit as good as I remembered it, no less lively or fresh.

I went back to two stores a week after my tasting and bought additional bottles of all the wines I liked: a stockpile of sorts to see me through until the 2021 wines arrive. I also took along a bottle of the 2020 Peyrassol Cuvée des Commandeurs Côtes de Provence to a BYO dinner with my wine-collector friend, Robert, who was in town for a few days.

“I like a good rosé in the summer,” said Robert when he saw the bottle. He’d brought along three great bottles of Barolo because he “couldn’t decide” which one to bring. I poured him a taste of the rosé, and Robert nodded. “It’s good,” he said. Had he noticed the vintage? He had not. I showed him the label: last year’s rosé. “Why does that matter?” he wanted to know.

## OENOFILE / Last Year's Rosés, Today's Terrific Values



### 1. 2020 Aix Coteaux d'Aix En Provence \$16

A lovely, light-bodied, Grenache-dominant, pale-salmon-colored rosé from Maison Saint Aix in Provence. Not a particularly complex wine, but certainly a refreshing one. A lively aperitif and a good match for light fare.

### 2. 2020 Muga Rioja \$13

This pale, pretty, peach-inflected Garnacha (Grenache)-dominant rosado from a top Rioja estate is a blend of red and white grapes (including Viura). It's one of my favorite

reasonably priced rosados year in and year out.

### 3. 2020 Domaine Tempier Bandol \$38

The rosés of Bandol, in Provence, are famously long-lived, and no rosé from the region is more famous than that of Domaine Tempier: a beautifully balanced, textured wine with notes of red fruit and a penetrating, mineral finish.

### 4. 2020 La Spinetta Il Rosé Di Casanova \$13

This delightfully fresh, fruity Sangiovese-Prugnolo Gentile rosé is marked by a wonderfully zippy acidity. It's produced at the Tuscan estate of Giorgio Rivetti, whose Piedmontese wines (Barbaresco, etc.) are highly acclaimed.

### 5. 2020 Peyrassol Cuvée Des Commandeurs Côtes de Provence \$27

An elegant yet vibrant rosé from one of the oldest properties in Provence, this Grenache-dominant blend is marked by floral notes and a crisp acidity. A rosé that can improve with (a bit of) time.

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