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## **What's new in the Grapevine this week?**

- **International Rose' Day Today**
- **Worried about Round-up in wine? (pt.2)**
- **The prejudiced palate**
- **Fun facts**

### **International Rose' Day Today**

In the last 3-4 years, we have seen a boom in Rose' sales. We used to carry about 8 Rose' wines in our chiller and probably another 3-4 sparkling Rose' labels in our sparkling section. Today we stock over 40 Rose' wines and probably another 12-15 sparkling Rose' labels.

When we ask people what they like in Rose' the answer we get 100% of the time is: "I don't like sweet ones!" Is it any wonder then that we don't have one sweet Rose' in the chiller? We have Rose' wines made from 20 different varieties and probably that many different shades of pink. We have the pale, almost clear Rose' from Provence to deep scarlet Rose' of Petite Verdot from South Africa. With all those different grapes and all those different shades, do you ever wonder how Rose' is made?

The maceration method is most commonly used for commercial Rosé. Maceration is when the grapes are pressed and allowed to sit in their skins. In red wine making, maceration usually lasts throughout the fermentation. For Rosé, the juice is separated from the skins before it gets too dark. For lighter varieties, like Grenache, it can take 24 hours. For darker red-wine varieties, like Mourvèdre, the process sometimes only lasts a few hours.

Another, less common method of making Rose' is the Saignée Method. The Saignée method is capable of producing some of the longest lasting and age worthy Rosé wines. It is actually a by-product of red winemaking. Early in the fermentation process of red wine about 10% of the juice is bled off. This leaves a higher ratio of skin contact on the remaining juice, making the resulting red wine richer and bolder. The "bled" wine or "Saignée" is then fermented into Rosé. Wines made from the Saignée

method are typically much darker than Maceration Method wines and also much more savory.

A third method is how I always imagined Rose' was made—by blending red wine into white wine. The blending method only requires a little bit of red wine added to a vat of white wine to make rosé. It doesn't take much red wine to dye a white wine pink, so usually these wines will have up to 5% or so, of a red wine added. This method is very uncommon with still rosé wines but happens much more in sparkling wine regions such as Champagne. An example of a very fine wine made with this technique is Billecart Salmon Rose', which is primarily Chardonnay with 8% of red Pinot Noir blended in.

Now that we have a stretch of warm, sunny days ahead it is appropriate that today is International Rose' Day and we can honor the day with a chilled glass of Rose'. Check out our huge selection; we have Rose' priced from \$9 up. Don't forget our sparkling section either, we have some great values and exciting tastes waiting in our chiller.

## **Worried about Round-up in Wine? (Pt.2)**

There has been a lot of hubbub in the press lately about Roundup and its possible carcinogenic properties. Round-up is the trade name for glyphosate which is a very effective weed killer. Glyphosate has been used for 30-35 years to kill weeds in food crops. Early research showed that it was effective when sprayed on leaves but residue was quickly bound up in the soil so little contamination or residue was left on the crop. Glyphosate stops a specific enzyme pathway, the shikimic acid pathway. The shikimic acid pathway is necessary for plants and some microorganisms but is not found in animals. It appeared to have no effect on humans for that reason. Currently, there is some conjecture that glyphosate can interfere with microorganisms in the human gut and that might cause health concerns.

Please take a deep breath and remember that I am not here to endorse glyphosate or encourage its use. I only want to put the ubiquitous presence of glyphosate in a historical context. In the last two years, it has been considered *unlikely* to cause cancer by the National Institute of Health, the EPA, and European Food Safety Authority. The World Health Organization, on the other hand, considers it “probably carcinogenic” which is a category that also includes red meat. The main study that pointed out the danger of cancer showed that for exposure to glyphosate for 5, 10, and 15 years cancer risk was actually **lower** than in the general population. It wasn't until the 20 years of exposure period that any increase showed for risk of cancer. Is this something to sweat?

Even the State of California who considers glyphosate a “probable” carcinogen sets the maximum dose of 160,000 parts per billion. The greatest concentration found in any wine is 51.4 parts per billion. The reality is that regulatory authorities have strict rules when it comes to pesticide residues. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

sets daily exposure limits at least 100 times below levels shown to have no negative effect in safety studies. Again, I ask: Should we be panicking?

So it seems this glyphosate stuff is in everything now including wine. In the test study, the greatest concentration of glyphosate found was 51.4 parts per billion in one of 20 wines sampled. Assuming the greatest value reported, 51.4 ppb, is correct, a 125-pound adult would have to consume 308 gallons of wine per day, every day for life to reach the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's glyphosate exposure limit for humans. To put 308 gallons into context, that would be more than a bottle of wine every minute, for life, without sleeping." I say, don't worry about the glyphosate, the amount of alcohol in the first 4 bottles is a lethal dose and will kill you.

I often encounter this same sort of hysteria about sulfites in wine. While less than 1% of the human population has a sulfite sensitivity, you would think sulfites are the cause for headaches, hangovers and hangnails. If you are allergic to sulfites, you may get hives and have trouble breathing within 30 minutes of sulfite exposure. Maybe the self-diagnosed sulfite sufferers should arm themselves with an asthma rescue inhaler because an order of shrimp has more sulfites than an entire bottle of Sangiovese. MacDonald's French fries have 1900 parts per million sulfites vs 80 ppm for the average red wine. Most sodas have the same amount of sulfites as wine. Dried apricots have 3500 ppm sulfites yet the legal limit for wine is just 350 ppm. (Believe me, if you get a wine with over 200 ppm, you will smell burned matches.) If you don't get a headache from fries, molasses, tea, shrimp, raspberry jam or soy sauce, maybe the problem isn't sulfites.

Surely, it is silly to worry about levels of herbicides or sulfites that are generally deemed safe and not worry about the amount of a chemical that has been demonstrated for centuries as a poison. Do you spend your life worried about the 80 parts per million of sulfites or the 145,000 parts per million of ethanol in your wine? Do you worry about 25 parts per billion of a chemical that has contradicting studies about its carcinogenic properties over 20 years or the 145,000,000 parts per billion of ethanol in wine that is proven to immediately affect your brain, liver and heart?

I'm sure this controversy about glyphosate isn't over, but as far as wine is concerned, we certainly have other things about which to worry.

## **Matt Kramer and the prejudiced palate**

The Wine Spectator website had an interesting essay recently by Matt Kramer where he posits that some folks have a prejudiced palate. He mentally calculates how rich he would be if he had a dollar for every time he heard:

- I never drink Chardonnay
- I don't like Italian wines
- None of that!!@#\*& Merlot for me!
- I only drink red wines

- Australian wine is all high alcohol fruit bomb stuff
- The French are the only ones who really know wine
- I never had a Washington State wine that was as good as a Californian
- How could anyone drink that dreck from California?
- I never spend more than \$10 on a bottle of wine
- I never spend less than \$20 on a bottle of wine
- I only buy wine if I like the label
- Organic wines taste so much better
- “Natural” wines taste like sauerkraut

His point is that if you keep trying different kinds of wine, you keep a broad-based palate. Exclusion is delusion when it comes to wine. For every prejudice, there is a wine which will change your mind. Kramer does not say you must always drink wine you don't like but every once in a while, you should try a wine on your banned list and see if your palate has changed or if you just blindly rejected it. I agree! Keep trying and keep tasting!

### **A few fun facts on wine**

Not a week goes by that I don't get an interesting fact, a quotation or a “rule of thumb” about wine. I keep many of them in a little file and pull them out now and again to put in the Grapevine. Here are a few odds and ends that I found to be pretty interesting:

- It is estimated that 30 million gallons of wine were lost in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake
- The word "ton" is derived from a “tun”, or wine barrel. It gets its name from the French "tonnerre," or "thunder," from the sound the barrels made when rolled.
- The dye used to stamp the grade on meat is edible. It's made from grape skins.
- “Jefferson ran the White House with only eleven servants (Abigail Adams had needed 30!), brought up from Monticello. There were no more powdered wigs, much less ceremony. Washington and Adams, according to Republican critics, had kept up almost a royal court. Jefferson substituted Republican simplicity - to a point. He had a French chef, and French wines he personally selected. His salary was \$25,000 per year - a princely sum, but the expenses were also great. In 1801 Jefferson spent \$6500 for provisions and groceries, \$2700 for servants (some of whom were liveried), \$500 for Lewis's salary, and \$3,000 for wine.”  
From *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, by Stephen E Ambrose
- Wine has so many organic chemical compounds it is considered more complex than human blood serum.
- Pinot Noir is all the rage these days and Merlot was the “hot” varietal in 1999, but in 1949, the “darling of the California wine industry” was Muscatel!