

## Three countries, three standout rosés

**I** love rosé wine in summer — still or sparkling, New World or Old.

I prefer my rosé to be translucent. The light color sends a message of weightlessness, lifting summer's oppressive humidity. I want it chilled but not cold, so that the delicate fruit aromas and flavors are able to stimulate my senses, which are trying to hibernate from the heat. My rosé deposits citrus-like acidity on my palate, refreshing me the way lemonade did in my childhood summers. And my rosé dares not offend me with an alcohol aftertaste.

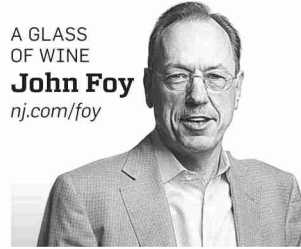
Quintessential Old World rosé comes from France's Languedoc region. The blistering midday sun is blocked by a vine-covered trellis under which a luncheon table has been set with an ice bucket cradling a bottle of rosé. With luck, it is the tangy 2012 Hecht & Bannier Languedoc Rosé.

About four years ago, I sat at the table with Gregory Hecht, a partner of this young negociant company — the French term for a firm or person who buys grapes from growers, or freshly fermented wine, and makes, bottles and markets the wine. Hecht & Bannier's embryonic wine efforts impressed me then and the ensuing vintages still do.

The 2012 Languedoc Rosé is nearly equal parts grenache, syrah and cinsault, three classic grapes of this ancient region. Its rose petal color is as pleasing as the

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floral and red fruit scents, and the cherry fruit flavor is enlivened by the refreshing acidity. Enjoy a glass of this well-made wine with a summer vegetable frittata.

The 2012 Hecht & Bannier Languedoc Rosé is distributed by Frederick Wildman & Sons in Summit. It retails for about \$13.

The wine world doesn't get older than Greece, but its embrace of modern winemaking also retains some ancient practices. On Santorini, a crescent-shaped island with windswept cliffs nearly 1,000 feet above its caldera, a unique form of viticulture bonsai thrives as generations of growers force the vines into ground-hugging circles to withstand the endless winds.

In 1903, Georgios Argyros founded the Argyros winery; it is now led by the family's fourth-generation, Matthew Argyros. A few weeks ago, a bottle of the 2012 Argyros Atlantis Rosé was delightfully drained at my seaside table at Santorini's Psaraki restaurant. Its rose color glistened in the brilliant sunlight, and the blend of the white assyrtiko and red

mantilaria grapes allowed assyrtiko's crisp citrus acidity to push mantilaria's cherry aroma and flavor to the forefront and finish with a dry, delicious taste. It was everything a rosé is supposed to be, including a good mate to my bowl of steamed mussels.

The 2012 Argyros Atlantis Rosé is distributed by Winebow in Montvale. It retails for about \$16.

The 2012 Las Rocas Rosé is from Calatayud in Spain's Aragon region. It is made only from garnacha (grenache) using the saignée method — the juice and skins are in contact for only a few hours to extract a minimum of color. After separation, the fermentation takes place in stainless-steel tanks and the wine is given a short period to stabilize, and then it is bottled.

What arrives in your glass is a pretty, pinkish-red colored wine with enticing strawberry aroma and flavor and a hint of cherry, too. The 2012 Las Rocas Rosé retains garnacha's natural high acidity, giving the wine a savory, clean, red fruit-flavored finish. Serve the 2012 Las Rocas Rosé with a cherry tomato tapa stuffed with a mash of hard-boiled egg and spicy mayonnaise.

The 2012 Las Rocas Rosé is distributed by Gallo Wines in Elizabeth. It retails for about \$13.

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