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# PROVENCE ROSÉ: TELLING BRUSHSTROKES

Provence rosé is *the* commercial success story of 21st-century wine. But is the style capable of greatness? Andrew Jefford is joined by Simon Field MW and Anthony Rose for the *WFW*'s first-ever rosé tasting, which revealed a set of nuanced, drinkable wines marked by consistent quality and deft winemaking

Well, here we are—and not before time—tasting rosé wine for *The World of Fine Wine*. In terms of wine genres, there has been only one success story over the past two decades, and it's pink. Between 2002 and 2018, global rosé production shot up by 40 percent, whereas still wine consumption in general grew by only 3 percent. Over the past quarter-century, global pink-wine consumption has tripled. Pink wines now account for 11.2 percent of global wine consumption; the figure is still growing. In the land of Montrachet, Haut-Brion blanc, and Clos Ste Hune, more pink wine is drunk than white wine and has been since 2009.

There is a surprising correlative. Never mind Burgundy, Jura, and Pomerol, Provence has become France's most commercially successful wine region, at least in terms of recent overseas progress: a 500 percent increase in exports, almost all of it pink, over the past 15 years. Provence provides the world with its rosé-wine benchmarks, and it is also Provence that manages to generate and sustain fine-wine prices for its most lustrous pink wines. If we can begin to talk about rosé as a fine wine, it is because of Provence.

## Nature and nurture

Why? Aptitude is certainly one reason. Provence is a Mediterranean zone mainly planted with red grape varieties—but at altitude. The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region has an average altitude of 1,686ft (514m), though most vineyards will be sited lower than this. Sea breezes, meanwhile, ventilate the thin coastal

## GREAT ROSÉ IS A WINE OF RADICAL UNDERSTATEMENT AND NUANCE; IT'S AS MUCH ABOUT WHAT YOU LEAVE OUT AS WHAT YOU PUT IN

strip. These growing conditions offer a sharp contrast to the warmer, more richly soiled Languedoc plain. The result is red-grape fruit that does not necessarily demand to be vinified into sturdy red wines, save in one or two zones like Bandol: there is an inherent delicacy to it from the off, which lends itself to the very short macerations required for making pink wine. Provence's white wines, meanwhile, can be excellent (and in my opinion better than its reds, Bandol aside)—a secret asset for pink-wine making, as we'll see in a moment.

Next: equipment and know-how. Making great rosé is certainly highly interventionist, presenting a daunting series of technical challenges. Getting the ratio of leaf area to fruit load is strategically significant, and ideally maturation should come slowly, without vine stress (a little irrigation helps). Since the grapes will generally be picked in hot, high summer, often in August, dawn picking is essential—when the fruit is just on the approach to full maturity but prior to the cusp.

Sorting and gentle (non-oxidative) handling is obligatory, then cool, ultra-light direct pressing, timed to

the second, under inert gases, with fining and chilling of the must and sometimes selective skin maceration. Fermentation, more or less cool, might be in neutral steel vessels or in cask. Lees can play a vital role: Some want the wines to go through malo; others don't. But producers won't breathe easily until the wines are in bottle—and maybe not even then, since clear glass (always vulnerable to light strike) is first choice in order to flaunt the wine's color.

Many of these techniques were pioneered in Provence, and it was in Provence, too, that the ultra-pale petal hue obtainable via direct pressing was perfected. All of this, impressively, can be achieved at volume: a colossal asset to the region. This is not a noticeably vineyard-sensitive wine, provided growers stay on top of all the technical details.

The cultural fit between rosé and Provence is a happy one, too. The world dreams of holidaying here, sipping waterside rosé twice a day, and the physical glamour of this, the prettiest of wines in the glass, helps marketing initiatives of all sorts—from film-star or grand-industrialist estate ownership, through celebrity endorsement, to straightforward brand-building.

The work of Sacha Lichine and his collaborators since 2006 has driven much of Provence rosé's success, with Garrus, Les Clans, and Château d'Esclans itself (and the ambition and "fine-white" aesthetic behind them) making much of the running, and with Whispering Angel becoming one of the most successful global 21st-century wine brands to date. (It alone accounts

for as much as 6.5 percent of the production of Côtes de Provence—and this gigantic appellation has 20,200ha [50,000 acres] under vine.) The Lichine team pioneered the use of white Rolle/Vermentino grapes in Provence rosé blends—which helps bring the white-almond creaminess many relish in Provence rosé, as well as reining back color and contributing freshness. Up to 20 percent white grapes can be used if they include Rolle (only 15 percent if not), and the grapes must be co-fermented; separate vinification followed by blending is outlawed.

## The global rosé benchmark

In addition to assaying some of Provence's top rosés by fine-wine standards, we also wanted to see "if they can age," so we asked producers to submit two wines, one young and one older. The fact that most producers considered 2020 "an older vintage" spoke volumes, but we did taste a trio of 2017s and one heroic 2008 with interest. Anthony Rose and Simon Field were both enthusiasts for the aging experiment. My view was that more was lost than gained with time as far as these four wines were concerned.

It was a different matter when it came to comparing wines from 2021 with their partner wines from 2020: of the six wines where we had a 2021 and 2020 pair, only one 2021 was preferred. One wine scored identically in both vintages, and the other four were all preferred in 2020. Up to 18 months' age, in other words, may bring dividends to fine rosé, so you don't need to stress if you aren't drinking last year's bottling.

Oak—another matter of some controversy in rosé—was generally liked when subtly done, perhaps because barrel-fermentation helps the integration of those creamy lees flavors that seem to work so well with Provence rosé. In terms of overall aesthetics, indeed, the wines generally won approval from our tasters and were considered good food partners, as well as delicious on their own. They were also singularly consistent: We noted only eight individual scores of 88 points or fewer.

Since I was the most enthusiastic of the three scorers, I'll conclude by underlining the achievement of these lovely wines. I mentioned that Provence was the global rosé benchmark—and it is—but it's remarkable how far short the other French and global competition falls. This is surprising for a "technical" wine style of this sort. What rivals fail to grasp is that success with rosé wine requires daring. Great rosé is a wine of radical understatement and nuance, from first glimpse, to final swallow. It's as much about what you leave out as what you put in. What is there—those faint but telling brushstrokes—must be pristine and impeccable. Drinkability, moreover, is rosé's supreme virtue, from day one of its life as a bottled wine, whereas fine-wine makers tend to entrust drinkability to time. Most rival rosés don't look as pretty and are more obvious in character: often too acid or too sweet (or both). Provençal winemakers understand restraint and the palate judgments that this quality requires. Their raw materials, no less importantly, put it within their grasp.

## ANDREW JEFFORD TOP WINES

Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2020	94
Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020	93
Léoube Rosé de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2021	93
Léoube Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2020	93
Château d'Esclans Côtes de Provence 2020	92
Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2021	92
Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2021	92
Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence 2019 (magnum)	92
Château Paquette Frejus Angelico Côtes de Provence 2021	92
Domaine Tempier Bandol 2020	92
Château d'Esclans Garrus Côtes de Provence 2020	91
Estandon Zenith Côtes de Provence 2021	91
Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2020	91
Léoube Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2021	91
Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence 2020 (magnum)	91

## AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Tasting	90	81-94
SF	90	85-92
AJ	90	81-94
AR	91	88-93

**Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2020** (13.5% ABV) | **92**

**SF** | Even by the standard of this tasting, the pallor here is noticeable: oatmeal; almost anemic; little by way of red fruit, unsurprisingly, stains the palate, which is not without its own mealy, gently honeyed charm. But the structure is spare, lackluster almost, and one is left a little bewildered, albeit without any demonstrable complaint. | **89**

**AJ** | In color terms, this is ultra-pale and evanescent: the bride stripped bare. Tantalizing, a sort of coppery-silver. Wonderful nose: subtle, pounded crushed almonds; honeysuckle; a dream of peach but definitely not the damn peaches themselves. And that's the rosé game: suggest, suggest, suggest. Just a little bit dry, perhaps—that's the only qualification, and it's carping. Intense, concentrated, mouth-filling, super-marrowsy, long. Poised restrained fruits. (Almond fruit is almost the main fruit, though you might also imagine a cherry or two.) Smooth glowing southern acidity; length and vinosity. Lovely wine. Is it Provence rosé or Provence white? Well, if it was in a white tasting, we might talk more about the prominent rounded fruits [...]. The coming together of red and white grapes (as I assume this is) produces something lovely. A wonderful thing to put in your mouth. | **94**

**AR** | Pale onion skin in color, classic Provence, bright, subtly floral in aroma, this shows an almost surprising weight and texture in the mouth. Full-bodied with a light spritz and a textural quality of energetically youthful, pure berry fruit verging on the intense; judging by the color, it seems to punch above its weight because the flavors linger. A stylish rosé that would happily be paired with seafood of all stripes. | **93**

**Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence (magnum) 2020** (13.5% ABV) | **92**

**SF** | Van Gogh hay; a pale meniscus and aromatic of poached pear, quince, and whisper of white pepper. Red fruits are not entirely absent, but a feature of this tasting, which majors in the art of taking the category more seriously, has been the subtlety and discretion on display beyond the well-documented pallor. A similar reception greets the palate, which almost reminds me of

**WONDERFUL NOSE: SUBTLE, POUNDED CRUSHED ALMONDS; HONEYSUCKLE; A DREAM OF PEACH BUT DEFINITELY NOT THE DAMN PEACHES THEMSELVES. AND THAT'S THE ROSÉ GAME: SUGGEST, SUGGEST, SUGGEST**

a Roussanne; a pigmented grape for sure, but I imagine that there is no Roussanne here. Lively, refreshing, but with weight and a finely etched finish. Apéro or as an accompaniment to food—take your choice. | **92**

**AJ** | A very pale “Saharan” rosé—but bright, silvered, and pretty. Fresh, clean, enticing, and marrowy. More almond and almond blossom than strawberry. Touch of free sulfur, but it will no doubt be on its way soon—it just takes the shine off the aroma at present. Lively, fresh, smooth, long, mellow, and quenchingly drinkable. In contrast to the aroma, you will find fruit here: soft tangerine and a little strawberry. Beautifully thickened by cream and almond—and given the shape and sense of vinosity, too. Lively and delicious. | **91**

**AR** | Pale salmon, fresh if quite quiet on the nose. With traces of spring blossom but with a light spritz on the tongue, it's juicy-textured in the mouth with a crowd-pleasing raspberryish flavor and good body, all the while retaining a freshness, even a crispness, on a refreshingly crisp, dry finish. I can see that this could be quite gulpable given the right company and food. | **92**

**Léoube Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2020** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Modest color, almost white-peach elegance. The nose is equally unforthcoming: tangerine in the bowl, pear skin, quince, and a hint of lemongrass. Quite assertive phenolic backdrop that, allied to a white-pepper spiciness, adds an interesting perspective to the ensemble. The wine is refreshing yet relatively full-bodied at the same time—still confidently advancing on this thinly threaded tightrope of appreciation. | **90**

**AJ** | Very pale harmonious salmon pink. This has held its freshness and gathered harmony: a lovely seamless aroma of warm cherry, strawberry, and currant fruit. Attractive, and no decline at this point, though maybe it has lost just a little bloom. It's acquired even more complexity, by contrast. Tender, singing, very complete: an absolutely magnificent rosé that can surely not have been better still a year ago, at least on the palate. This just surges out across the tongue like a figure skater, packed with splendid subtle tangerine and lemon and cherry fruit, smooth and energetic and assured. It all subsides in a swirl of cream. Grand. | **93**

**AR** | A super-pale coppery pink in color, this is quite shy in aroma, a touch floral. There is a light refreshing spritz on the tongue, and it shows a lot more in berry-fruit flavor, with nicely weighted cranberry fruit whose mid-palate juiciness morphs to savory, saline, and dry on the finish, even with a light food-friendly grip at the end. | **91**

**Château d'Esclans Garrus Côtes de Provence 2020** (14% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Modest color, almost buckwheat, muted like the Millet *Angelus*. The aromatics are attractive, suitably dignified: cobnut, almond essence, and lemongrass, hints of honey and papaya mango; exoticism should not be altogether repressed in the South of France, one would have thought—and if they add a dimension to a category that is

**FIRM PHENOLIC STRUCTURE, WITH VESTIGIAL ORANGE AND LEMON PITH, FIGS, AND ECHOES FROM THE KITCHEN GARDEN. ROBUST WITHOUT LOSING THE CHARM THAT MUST LIFT ALL ROSÉ WINES FROM A BACKSTORY OF COMPROMISE**

almost too keen to be taken seriously, so much the better. There are some eminently serious wines here, and this is one of them; generosity of spirit and rigor of construction should never be incompatible in this environment. | **91**

**AJ** | Another very pale wine, a kind of yellow frost. Fascinating. Surely some oak here and a big hatful of lees; you might almost imagine you were in Pessac-Léognan. But why not? Smells great. For all that, I can't quite find any kind of red fruit, and maybe rosé drinkers would be looking for that. This is a kind of Provence tribute act to Haut-Brion and Montrachet. Yes, that's it. Quite a full-on white, in truth; structured and firm and deeply pollinated and bee-busy. Intriguing but probably the wrong tasting; I also feel that in this category, [Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2020] is the better wine. Any fruit is definitely swamped here. But I'm glad someone is trying. And all-round classy flavors top to bottom. | **91**

**AR** | A very pale coppery partridge eye in color, this shows a fair whack of sweet, spicy oak in its aromatic profile. There's a faint spritz, and that oak spiciness follows through in the flavors, even if the fruit quality is not overwhelmed by it. Perhaps not for purists because of that level of oak, but there's no doubting the oak is stylish and adds a dimension of impressive appeal to a wine that's out to impress and, in the end, just about walks that tightrope. | **92**

**Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Ballet-pump color, well-worn, sandstone. Then the nose, which is softly herbal: fennel, anise in the distance, maybe a touch of cinnamon. Firm phenolic structure with vestigial orange and lemon pith, figs, and echoes from the kitchen garden. Food-friendly and robust, without losing the charm that must lift all rosé wines from a backstory of compromise and inherent levity. | **90**

**AJ** | Bandol dares to be a little bit pinker than Provence in general. This, in fact, is orange-pink. Round, warm, full; lots of tangerine dream. Gorgeous fruits and very tempting; subtle, creamy, refined, but a bit more drive and push from these soils. I hate, it's true, the fact that so much rosé is made in Bandol (certainly the best site in France for Mourvèdre, so a sort of tragedy

that its great red wines aren't more widely appreciated), but when I sniff this wine, I can see the problem. Damn it, this just smells great! Breadth and dimensions on the nose. And a bit of oak here, too, no? Which, here, works terrifically well. (I might be wrong: subtle.) Structure, wealth, depth, a powerful train of fruit flavor: no concessions here. Supple and textured, ruffled and mouth-filling. Density and breadth; broad shoulders. Autumn apple and mango and quince, as well as tangerine and blood orange, and it's all terrific. Not Côtes de Provence, but great rosé. All sort of mineral salts and stony things afterward, plus that overarching structure. | **93**

**AR** | A coppery bronze in color, this is subtly floral and spicy in aroma, quite intriguing and inviting. There's plenty of appealing, juicy ripe berry fruit tinged with spice, and it's even a tad peppery, the fullness of body, juiciness of texture, and savory qualities making it an appetizing candidate for the likes of prawns and lobster. | **91**

**Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence 2019 (magnum)** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Soft copper; pewter almost. The nose is reticent; the haywain behind the apple orchard, hints of nougat, almond and peat. The palate rejoins a felicitous phase when primary cedex to secondary, without entirely disappearing—there is tension, in other words, and a pleasing savory subtext: green fruit, and a shard of salinity on the finish. | **90**

**AJ** | As with its sibling, bright and silvery, with as much faint sienna as pink. This is actually a little prettier than the 2020, since it doesn't carry any free sulfur, while the almond has softened and honeyed out a little. Hard to see any fruits, however. Excellent here—and as with its 2020 sibling, there is much greater fruit lift on the palate than on the nose, though a little less cream. Mellow and harmonious and refined—a beautiful drink and (as with so many of these wines) actually “finer” than you might suspect, disarmed as we are by drinkability and visual seduction. The evidence from this magnum pair is that the extra year has paid dividends. | **92**

**AR** | A pale onion skin in color, this is starting to show some development in its aroma with pleasing aromatic berry notes, while the fruit splashes onto the tongue with a nice prickle.

**APPEALING, JUICY, RIPE BERRY FRUIT TINGED WITH SPICE, THE FULLNESS OF BODY, JUICINESS OF TEXTURE, AND SAVORY QUALITIES MAKING IT AN APPETIZING CANDIDATE FOR THE LIKES OF PRAWNS AND LOBSTER**

It is fresh and crisp in the cranberryish spectrum, with a supple juiciness of texture that lingers in the mouth, bringing a nice feeling of succulence etched with a hint of oyster-shell salinity as it tapers to a satisfyingly dry conclusion. | **92**

**Château Coussin César à Sumeire Ste-Victoire Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Pale onion skin, a slightly watery rim, then a gentle aromatic of nectarine and spring flowers. An attractive nose of Guadeloupe melon, apricot, and orange pith; behind that, on the windowsill maybe, a strawberry punnet. The palate's youthful balm is dreamy and focused at the same time, vistas of soft red fruit held in check by gentle tannins. Quintessential eponymous style but which does not lack for substance. | **92**

**AJ** | Pale peach-pink with a steel sheen. Some free sulfur—but beneath that, attractive delicate fruits: peach and strawberry. Soft, comely, inviting and classical. Clean yet mouth-filling, with ample fruit and developed fruit acidity, too; some vinous drive at the finish. Sound concentration; pure and long. An excellent young Côtes de Provence benchmark, though the free sulfur is a little disappointing in a wine that will be drunk as young as possible. An excellent combination of fruit and marrow here, without obtrusive rounding or any prod of acidity. | **88**

**AR** | Pale salmon fresh floral aromatics, quite intensely floral in fact. A touch of licorice and clove, too, generous weight and texture, nice richness and intensity underlined by a juicy yet refreshing acidity, for a fine, dry finish. So, this is a wine with sufficient depth to keep not just for this year but a couple of years to come. | **93**

**Château d'Esclans Côtes de Provence 2020** (13.5% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Princetown orange, well worn; viscosity evidenced in the glass. The aromas, initially a touch reductive, betray an oaky heritage, modestly delineated: vanillin, spice and then hints of white pepper. The weight thereby gained is imposing, but does it square with an aspiration for ethereal elegance that one has always associated with this category? Is that the aspiration here in any event? One is left with questions rather than answers, but the inquiry is not necessarily entirely pessimistic. | **90**

**AJ** | Bright, pale salmon-pink. Harmonious and melted, though lots of fresh fruit remains: lime, peach, papaya. Any oak here? It almost seems so. Impressive, concentrated, intriguing, and surely oaked. And the oak works well, lending the wine a kind of sap and sinew and frame and grip it wouldn't otherwise have. The fruit is there in the center, holding the wine in balance with its gravitational force. Excellent stuff; and if you love Provence rosé, you should take a look at this. | **92**

**AR** | Pale onion-skin hue. This is subtly floral and spicy in aroma, perhaps from a touch of oak here, promising some attractive fruit, and it delivers nicely, starting out with a light spritz, moving into a classic, even classy, with good weight and juiciness of raspberryish fruit on the mid-palate before turning savory on the finish. A crowd-pleaser that's full-flavored and elegantly balanced. | **91**

**THE OAK WORKS WELL. THE FRUIT IS IN THE CENTER, HOLDING THE WINE IN BALANCE WITH ITS GRAVITATIONAL FORCE. EXCELLENT STUFF. AND IF YOU LOVE PROVENCE ROSÉ, YOU SHOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THIS**

**Domaine Tempier Bandol 2020** (13.5% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | An attractive soft sandstone color, Tiffany roses, early season nectarine. The nose is classic in its rigor, reticence, and unsparing intimation of what may be to come. The pomace-stoned, pink-marbled passage to the boudoir. All this, rather unusually in this lineup, is fully substantiated by the tasting, the appreciation of the wine's structural rigor growing as the nuance feeds into the texture; savory elements, the sweetness that only a very dry wine can sketch, liminally, as the senses confer and agree on structural integrity and a finely crafted balance. | **91**

**AJ** | Bright pink-orange. Just a bit of the Mourvèdre mouse in evidence here, but all it does is add intrigue and gravitas to splendid warm cherry-rose southern fruits. Super nose: ample fruit, but nothing unsuited. This is more developed and overt than [Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020], but it works terrifically well. (The mouse clears off after a bit.) Yes, a much fruitier and franker wine than the [Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020] (though not simple in any way in the global rosé wine context), but it is stylish and deep and has wonderful depth and breadth of late-summer bramble and bubbling plum. And why shouldn't they be in rosé, too? Vinous, long, and fine; excellent. I can also imagine another taster (maybe my *confères*) reversing the order here; this is a totally subjective decision. I like the fruited finesse and subtlety of the [Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020] but the structure, wealth, and power here are also outstanding. | **92**

**AR** | A coppery salmon pink in color, this smells of ripe, fresh strawberries, and with a light spritz on the tongue, it's pleasingly juicy in texture. It's quite powerfully vinous, in fact, its fruit teetering on the edge, but ripe enough with a saline edge to bring both balance and flavor to the firm, full-bodied fruit. | **90**

**Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Soft and modest of hue, with similar reserve on the nose; cornfields in the morning, hints of almond and even sourdough. The fruit is discreet, not lacking for confidence; gastronomically versatile, full of potential. These wines are all



## SIMON FIELD MW'S VERDICT

A rosé tasting—are we sure about that? So much pallor in the younger wines, then some of their senior colleagues taking on a coppery, almost orange hue. Ah yes, Provence rosé is famously light in color, so we are told, and this underwrites the seriousness with which we should take the category as a whole. So we are told. And so it proves, with so many of these examples seemingly hermaphrodite, or at least Janus-like in terms of both aesthetic and texture. Is the purpose to succor indulgence in the bars on the promenade at Antibes, or does the mission go deeper than that, sidling up to gastronomic potential with a plate of *fruits de mer* and then, why not, going the whole hog and forging a reputation as a *vin de garde*? Goodness; what a prospect.

To what extent did this tasting support such vaulting ambition? Up to a point, Lord Copper! The anemic hue was endemic, the absence of estery or confected notes most welcome, and, with the acknowledged superstars of the region (by price at the very least)—namely, Garrus from Esclans

and Muse from Miraval—both scoring well for me, oak-influenced winemaking and a sense of entitlement apparently offering little impediment to authenticity. The other salient features, from my point of view, were that the older wines actually fared quite well (only three of my top ten were from 2021), which again underscores qualitative aspiration, and (noted *en passant*) though the “fuller” Bandols did well (two of them were in my top seven), they certainly did not reign supreme.

The less positive pointers were twofold: first, a lack of discernible (sub-) regional identity, with even the designated areas within Côtes de Provence hardly represented, ditto Coteaux d'Aix and Coteaux Varois en Provence (the latter completely absent); and second, the fact that, actually, I didn't score anything above 92 points, perhaps indicative of an overall sense that this is as good as it gets (very good in some instances), but that there is no point in pushing things further. Otherwise, we may no longer be allowed, morally at least, to call them rosé wines—and where would that leave us?

## TOP WINES

Château Coussin César à Sumeire Ste-Victoire Côtes de Provence 2021 **92**

Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence (magnum) 2020 **92**

Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2019 **92**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Château d'Esclans Garrus Côtes de Provence 2020 **91**

Domaine Tempier Bandol 2020 **91**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2018 **91**

Estandon Légende Côtes de Provence 2017 **91**

Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2021 **90**

Château Vignelaure Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2021 **90**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2020 **90**

Léoube Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2020 **90**

Château d'Esclans Côtes de Provence 2020 **90**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020 **90**

Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence (magnum) 2019 **90**

Château Vignelaure Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2008 **90**

about a veneer of apparent austerity, expertly judged to conceal a broad Mediterranean generosity. In youth, the former facet is clearly in the ascendant, which often makes them hard to judge. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. | **89**

**AJ** | Classic pale peachy pink, with silver glints. Elegant, tenderly fruity aromas, deft and well crafted. Restrained: all hints and nuances, as it should be. This is very pure, cool, restrained, and elemental up against its peers. It almost declines to charm yet nonetheless succeeds in charming because well-made Côtes de Provence rosé just has to charm. Another wine with as much lemon as strawberry, and here with a delicious saline edge too: very fine work. Fresh to begin with; briefly fruity in the middle; creamy and mealy to end; vinous (for food, for satisfaction) yet fresh and drinkable, leaving the mouth spotless and tingling. | **92**

**AR** | Pale onion skin in color, this is subtly floral and raspberryish, with a bright freshness to the aroma. There's some energy and youthfulness to the juicy-textured berry fruit and a nicely textured smoothness as well, with a faint streak

of astringency at the back of the mouth, even some grip on the finish, making it a classic food rosé for sweet shellfish of the scallops and prawn kind. | **91**

**Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2021** | **91** (14% ABV)

**SF** | Soft salmon-back color, modest and yet at the same time beguiling. There is a crescendo to this wine that repays several visits; a little more structure, earthy, self-assured, and resplendently fruity, and yet at the same time, a rigor born out of youth, an almost savory gastronomic potential, and the capacity to evolve with dignity. | **90**

**AJ** | Bright pale pink with peachy glints. Warmer, fuller than many of its peers, and more citrus (blood orange, pomelo) than they offer in aromatic terms. Even a hint of white chocolate—La Londe traits, or a domaine style? We only have one wine from here, so hard to say. Ample and full, warm and long-limbed, vinous and firm: headturning out on the beach. Almost a risky

style in this sense, but it works very well for me, glowing yet fruited and with charm, as well as generosity. A complete food style, as well as a mouth-filling apero. Fruit perfumed to the very end: fine raw materials here. | **92**

**AR** | A pale salmon pink in color. This is quite distinctive in aroma, not intense, but distinctive, showing appealing floral, ripe berry and spicy notes. There's good fruit weight and texture here, with an attractive sweetness of strawberryish fruit bisected by a cleansing streak of perky acidity for, overall, a powerful yet refreshingly dry rosé that would suit, classically, pink fish and shellfish. | **90**

**Château Vignelaure Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **91**

**SF** | Pale; a still, soft pink; a Monet water lily on a calm day; verbena and almond, freesias even. On the palate, the long day advances, the hitherto reticent scents become animated and grow in confidence; red fruits appear, the tableau thereby gains color and a capacity to enchant and entice. All in good time. Give it a good amount of time. Long gone are the days when it might appear absurd to comment thus about a rosé wine. | **90**

**AJ** | Pale and graceful peach-pink. Sweet, fresh, tender, almost imploring: Only Provence rosé aromas can do this. But a little less resource and nuance than the best of its peers—at first. After ten minutes in the glass there is much more articulacy and charm. A brisker, tauter style than further along the coast, but beautifully crafted nonetheless. That singing structural vinous core is there, with its milled almond thickness; very bright, almost crisp cherry fruits, but without even committing the crime (for rosé) of hard, percussive acidity. Admirable Coteaux d'Aix. | **92**

**AR** | Classic onion-skin hue. There's some subtly intense fresh redcurrant-like aroma and a hint of spring blossom. The fruit is subtle and savory, with a touch of mid-palate sweetness in raspberryish mode, tapering to a finish that's savory and dry, and perhaps some early-picked fruit to give this wine delicacy, freshness, and energy. | **90**

**Léoube Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2021** (13.5% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Dawn haze over the hills, a soft gently challenging hue; the press has been more than gentle it seems! And yet, as so often, this only presages weight on the palate and the promise of more to give: herbs and hints of *garrigue*; incense maybe, lemongrass and wild cherry, a hint of white pepper even. Feline, biding its time. | **89**

**AJ** | Super pale pink with a shower of silver hidden in there. Refined, mealy, oatflake, and nut: a classy scent. Refined and enticing. Beyond reduction and clean but made in a clearly reductive style. Elegant and fresh, restrained, subtly fruited (strawberry and orange); fine vinosity, purity, and drive. Another model Côtes de Provence rosé that does everything it should do with impressive purity and assurance but without ever sacrificing the diagnostic drinkability. Fine drinking here. | **91**

**AR** | A curious, ultra-pale, partridge-eye pink that's almost watery in the glass, and it's

deceptive because it's attractive in floral aromas, with a bright spritz on the tongue, and elegantly juicy and fresh in a berry-fruit quality that finishes quite dry, even saline. Perhaps not really giving a lot away at this stage, but its youthful vigor shows distinct promise, especially as rosé for food. | **91**

**Léoube Rosé de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2020** (13% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Apricot-skin color, bright and limpi. The nose is smoky, with flowers and peat, nectarine and orange peel. Once again, in the mouth the wine seems to lack for energy, creative tension and a capacity to animate. Perfectly correct, probably robust enough for most Mediterranean fare, but still lacking the perfect intangible poise that lifts, in both senses, the best examples. A shame, because it all started so well. | **89**

**AJ** | As with all the Cotes de Provence 2020s, there is now salmon among the petal pink. Complex, fresh, complete, vinous, layered: real peaches and cream, and still fruit-fresh. Great harmony and serenity now, which only increases the sense of teasing. A super nose. What would happen with further aging? Might it just simply fade away? Tragic, if so: This is glorious now, among the very best. An excellent wine: fresh, pristine, high-definition, all the qualitative virtues of the style (vinosity and creamy depths, as well as lingering, teasing fresh fruits). Absolutely no decline here, and indeed it seems credible to me that it might have retained its original qualities and gained in harmony. Super stuff. Magnificent rosé that has just stepped back a little into sobriety. | **93**

**AR** | A pale, coppery onion skin. This is bright and subtly floral and fresh in its aromas, showing an appealing raspberryish sweetness of fruit and redcurrant acidity that combine in a bright, balanced style with good weight. It finishes on a refreshingly dry note with no hard edges. | **89**

**Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2020** (13% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Light onion-skin color, watery at the rim; a refined and still rather closed nose. Petrichor, slate, and hints of earthenware pots; roses and spring flowers somewhere in the background. The palate has just a hint of caramelized evolution beyond the strawberry and green figs; cobnuts and rosehip all enveloped by a balmy viscosity and a pleasing versatility of purpose. | **90**

**AJ** | Pale salmon pink with rose glints. A little less enticing than some of its peers. The fruit has drained somewhat here, and the nose has consequently dried a little. The cream seems more cardboard without the fruit. Looked at a little later, the fruit has arrived, and the cream now seems fresher, so perhaps we just bumped into a little reduction issue. Works well on the palate: still fresh here, poised, lively and mouth-filling, with both terrific fruit and impressive vinosity, texture and length. Super, mellow, and soft-contoured rosé that would have won an even higher score with better, fresher aromatics from the off. Grand drinking. | **91**

**AR** | Classic partridge eye in color. This is bright and fragrantly floral with some Provençal herbal undertones, too, its freshness underlined by a light, bright spritz on the tongue, followed by

## GLORIOUS NOW. FRESH, PRISTINE, HIGH-DEFINITION, ALL THE QUALITATIVE VIRTUES OF THE STYLE (VINOSITY, CREAMY DEPTHS, AS WELL AS LINGERING, TEASING FRESH FRUITS)

some pleasingly savory cranberry fruit that's refreshingly crisp and dry. Overall a subtle and delicate rosé that reveals itself gradually in the glass as time goes on. | **90**

**Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2019** (13.5% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Sandy orange color, crepuscular. The nose is a touch leafy, evolved, with hints of peat and incense evidenced, a touch of soapstone, sage, thyme, and bay leaf. On the palate, there is a patina of mature, pithy citric fruit, with hints of pepper and then a firm slightly metallic finish, which is unexpected and therefore incongruous. Overall, the wine is impressive and, coming back to it, rather inspiring. | **92**

**AJ** | Bright peachy pink. Mellow, lush, deliquescent, and compelling—but this is unlucky enough to come after our two Bandol rosé wines, where the force of fruit was so outstanding, and it suffers just a little bit in the comparison. Still an aroma of great charm and visceral appeal, however. On the palate, the weight seems to be gaining the upper hand: stolid and sound but lacking a little lift and intrigue. Good wine, but the charm has fled, and assuming this is the same domaine as [Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2021], then the younger version is clearly a head better. | **88**

**AR** | Coppery bronze in color. There's some lightly smoky, spicy berryish fruit in the aroma. Plenty of ripe, full-bodied fruit that's very much on the savory side, even to the point of saltiness on the back palate, all of which brings a refreshing twist to a full-bodied style that might otherwise be heavy but, in its own distinctive, food-friendly style, actually works. | **91**

**Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2018** (13.5% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Onion-skin color, quite viscous at its watery rim. Nose of charcuterie and figs, herbs, too, and somewhere in the distance, damask roses and plum skin. On the palate, there is both concentration and depth, the umami notes conspiring with the savory texture without failing to align themselves with the shards of firm acidity and balanced but appreciable alcohol. A warm vintage, for sure, but the sea breezes have bequeathed a manageable shape and siren whispers of salinity. | **91**

**AJ** | The salmon pink here is heading for the yellow exit, but there is still plenty there. Almost a mimosa brightness among the orange-pink. Lush, rich, ripe, mature. All the benefits of that—great harmony—but no sense of particular energy or push. Mushrooms growing among the fruits. Vivid, lively, fresh, vinous, and long. All the structure is in place, but the delicate fruits are beginning to slip away, alas. Even in Bandol, it seems, young is best. | **88**

**AR** | Coppery bronze in color. The aromas are of ripe, almost exotic fruit such as mango and guava, and the flavors are ripe and exotic, too, buoyed by an appealing freshness for balance and texture, all of which dissipate nicely on the tongue in a dry wash that cleanses the palate on the finish. | **92**

**Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Delicate coral, viscosity at the meniscus betraying rigor of intent. The nose is precocious yet expressive, hints of fennel and blackcurrant leaf, citrus fruit. Plenty of *matière*; wild strawberries evoke Bergman's refrain, orange peel and nutmeg; the complexity of a scherzo. Resolution promised over the next two to three years. Quite steely, too, but it does not lack for interest. | **91**

**AJ** | Bright, glinting pale pink; a swish of gas on the sides of the glass. Lots of fresh-fruit here, and some grassy lift, too, as if it had some Côtes de Gascogne in there somewhere. Juicy and enticing. Ditto on the palate: a very bright mouthful with fresh fruits lifted by that grassy swirl; just a hint of pear-drop ester. Carefully engineered through fermentation for maximum freshness—though that comes at the expense of some length and drive. | **88**

**AR** | A pale coppery salmon pink in color. This is fresh, with good intensity of aroma combining floral top notes with hints of pear and berry. And when you taste, after a light spritz on the tongue, it's really attractive, showing fresh raspberry and pear flavors in a smooth-textured, refreshingly dry, nicely balanced whole. | **91**

**Estandon Zenith Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **90**

**SF** | Pale nacreous pink, gentle at the rim, with aromatics of strawberry, griotte and white pepper. Classic of construct, youthful reduction dissipating rapidly. The palate is sturdy, broad-based, with acidity and fruit already locked in a confident embrace. Cobnut and verbena etch the detail. Only the finish appears reticent at the moment. | **87**

**AJ** | Bright, spotless pale pink A ground-almond fullness over a sheerer, less developed fruit than its peers—more lemon than strawberry. Almost austere and grown-up, but satisfying and enticing in that style. Very good here, very pure, very driving, very refined—but uninsistent, finally, almost leanly vinous. Again, the same understated flavor notes of lemon and almond; just a little cream to carry them forward through the palate. Terrific, chic, assured Côtes de Provence rosé with more “cool breeze” than most. | **91**

## ANTHONY ROSE'S VERDICT

As eye-catching as Provence rosé is, if you're expecting all Provence rosé to be a pale salmon pink, nothing could be further from the truth. Its 50 or more shades of pink—from water-white pale, all the way through to a deepish burnished bronze and rose gold—make the style as intriguing as it is appealing.

No doubt there are plenty of here-today, gone-tomorrow *vins d'une nuit* in Provence rosé, but in this tasting, while the vivid aromas and bright berry of last year's vintage are already giving a lot of pleasure at this nubile, youthful stage of development, an equal number, at a year older, showed excellent depth of flavor with no loss of freshness. The best, even going

as far back as 2017, while showing a degree of maturity, were still drinking beautifully. Albeit a one-off, the 2008 vintage rosé was a fascinating museum piece.

If we were tasting the crème de la crème, it would be wrong to generalize about the quality or staying power of Provence rosé, but overall these wines consistently showed delicious bright fruit flavors and high quality. In medium-to full-bodied style, generally dry and often with a saline background, the balance made these Provence pinks good food wines with no loss of freshness. Oak was generally well handled, and even where a little more obtrusive, it did not detract from the overall style.

## TOP WINES

Château Coussin César à Sumeire Ste-Victoire Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2020 **93**

Château Coussin César à Sumeire Ste-Victoire Côtes de Provence 2017 **93**

Château d'Esclans Garrus Côtes de Provence 2020 **92**

Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence 2020 (magnum) **92**

Muse de Miraval Grande Cuvée Côtes de Provence 2019 (magnum) **92**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2018 **92**

Château L'Afrique César à Sumeire Côtes de Provence 2017 **92**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Estandon Zenith Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Château La Mascaronne Côtes de Provence 2021 **91**

Domaine des Oullières Oh! Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2020 **91**

Secret de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2020 **91**

Château d'Esclans Côtes de Provence 2020 **91**

Hecht & Bannier H&B Bandol 2020 **91**

Château Les Mesclances Faustine Côtes de Provence La Londe 2019 **91**

Château Vignelaure Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2008 **91**

**AR** | Very pale onion skin in color. This starts out a tad shy in aroma, not giving much away, but soon a hint of pear and berry comes along, there's a faint spritz of fresh berry fruit, and the initial sweetness of fruit lingers with a degree of verve and sinew before turning to sour-savory on the tongue, becoming drier by the second and bringing a pleasingly refreshing twist to the finish. | **91**

**Léoube Rosé de Léoube Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Soft marigold color; plenty of "tears" garlanding the glass. The nose is, as it probably still should be, fairly unexpressive: Hints of pine nut, almond and versilia rose, but the roses are only now beginning to open up, the walls still traced only by spidery stems. The palate is more workmanlike, obdurate and still hard to read. The red end of the fruit spectrum trumps the citric profile; there is an amorphous structural block here that is hard to decipher. Does it resonate with potential, or has the structure already showed its somewhat unimaginative hand? Let's have another look in a year's time. | **88**  
**AJ** | Bright yet pale-hued peach-pink. Gathered, emphatic red fruits; a little more force here than in the more evanescent peer, though never anything as vulgar as "full fruit"—we are still teasing. Lots of roundness, amplitude, and wealth of fruit (within the Provence context)—frankly a food

style (though you wouldn't choke on it before a meal either). Juicy, expressive, and ample, though some of its peers are more nuanced. Faintest hint of tannin, and I like that. | **90**

**AR** | Pale, bright, onion-skin hue. This is attractively floral in aroma, with fresh berry notes. There's nicely juicy raspberry fruit that persists on the tongue before dissolving into a more savory character, yet still fresh and elegantly dry on the finish, with enough weight and texture to make it a good food wine for the likes of sashimi. | **90**

**Domaine des Oullières Oh! Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2020** (12.5% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Modest coloration: sunrise orange on a cloudy day. The nose is intriguing, a discreet offering of spring flowers, jasmine even, peonies, the most bashful of roses, then overripe oranges and even quince. All the imaginative effort is a little compromised by the palate, which is by turns foursquare and rather prosaic. Hints of *jambon cru* and nutmeg do little to enliven a wine that seems to be tiring a little too soon. | **87**  
**AJ** | Pale and peachy, bright, with silver glints. Fresh, bright, restrained, just a touch of ester: bottled so as to keep the reins taut (or that Coteaux d'Aix style once again). Much less aromatically expansive than our Cotes de Provence 2020s. Still zesty, fresh, taut, and

bright—you might even guess 2021, though perhaps there has been some evolution in the fruit, which is no longer primary and allusive in a simple sense. Excellent and fresh, though. | **90**

**AR** | A very pale onion skin in color, almost cliché Provence. This shows an appealing subtlety of floral aroma with a touch of berry-fruit sweetness; it's bright, having retained a nice bright freshness of berry fruit with a weight and lithe textural quality that belies its somewhat pallid coloring. And from mid-palate berry-fruit sweetness, it turns to savory and ever so saltily dry in an elegantly balanced, medium-bodied style that would go very well with shellfish. | **91**

**Château Coussin César à Sumeire Ste-Victoire Côtes de Provence 2017** (14% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Soft Tiffany rose color. Gingerbread. Pleasingly evolved, leafy, quince and a touch of parsley; the herbs at some point take over from the fruit, and in this case the transfer of power has been felicitous. There is a tannic undercurrent here and residual sweetness that has not become either caramelized or jammy. Not to be attempted as an apéritif, but it will probably show very well in the company of softy spicy Mediterranean cuisine. | **88**

**AJ** | Still just peach-pink, with a subtle orange cast. Tiring a little now; all the fresh enchantment has fled. Nice to smell for all that, but it doesn't get the hairs on the back of your neck up and tingling. Ditto here. Soft and still with a little demure charm, but hurry along before the cream (slowest to fade) disappears entirely. | **87**

**AR** | A classic onion skin in color. This is fresh and floral, with an appealing texture and berry-fruit flavor that's now starting to develop complex secondary flavors in a full-bodied framework of substantial viscosity, with underlying saline notes, and at this level of maturity, energy, too. So, very much a food rosé, to my mind, for white meats and fish such as *vitello tonnato*. | **93**

**Château L'Afrique César à Sumeire Côtes de Provence 2017** (13.5% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Evolved color and aromatic; modest onion skin, gentle fade at the rim. An autumnal nose; umami, forest floor, lemon pith that has dried a little, hothouse plants. Beyond the initial speculation as to whether or not this should be assessed as a rosé wine, one must recalibrate expectation and invigorate the lexicon. The capacity to soak up the Mediterranean olive-oil-soaked cuisine, for example, should not be undermined here. A fascinating appraisal—reappraisal, even. | **88**

**AJ** | Also peach-pink with a subtle orange cast; a touch deeper than [Château L'Afrique César à Sumeire 2017]. Lots of soft honeycomb among the peach here: pretty, graceful scents. Of the three Côtes de Provence '17s, this is clearly the best for me; there are still fresh, tender fruits hidden among the fragrant balsam. Lovely aromas. Ditto on the palate: This still drinks very well as a genuine Provence rosé and has charm and lingering fruit. Is there any case for keeping the '21 sibling (which I assume we have) until it is four years old—or more? No, there isn't. | **88**

**AR** | A pale coppery bronze in color. This is fresh and attractively fragrant, with juicy berry-fruit flavors in full-bodied mode, with a ripe berry-fruit sweetness that's quite concentrated and finely textured, turning to savory and dry on the finish. Its maturity and elegant balance bring secondary characters that make it nicely compatible with the likes of crab salads and tuna-based sushi. | **92**

**Château Paquette Côtes de Provence Frejus Angelico Côtes de Provence 2021** (12.5% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Coppery color, faded a touch. Spritz, too, but only modest of intent and dissipating rapidly, the nose unformed, maybe a little leafy. The palate, by contrast, is somewhat fulsome, unformed at the very least, youthful indifference obscuring the shape that might yet materialize. Structurally this may be well suited to Mediterranean gastronomy; for the moment, it is too loose-knit to attack solus. | **86**

**AJ** | Delicate salmon pink with a bit of spritz. As much nutty as fruity, with some vegetal notes, too. Nougatine and apricot. Definitely one of the mellower styles among our young wines. Full, rounded, smooth, soft, seamless, graceful. Lovely breadth of fresher, redder fruits here (strawberry and cherry) but vinous, long, modulated, complex, tapering seamlessly into a creamy finish. Very satisfying and convincing. Just enough concentration to detain but not so much as to impinge on drinkability. The ideal resumed in exuberant style. | **92**

**AR** | Onion skin in color, this is fresh and pleasantly if not intensely floral. It flows across the tongue with an appealing sweetness of redcurrant-like fruit, quite juicy and accessible in style, and refreshingly dry with no hard edges. | **89**

**Château L'Afrique Côtes de Provence 2021** (13% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | Light pink, almost a soft orange, the backdrop to Watteau's *fête galante*. Pretty nose: mandarin, plum and pith; red fruit discernible too but oh so discreet. The palate captures and mirrors this initial impression, maybe the white cherry and spice a little more evident. The promise thus far is somewhat compromised by a lack of weight on the finish. Maybe this wispy ethereal dissipation is part of the plan; Puck-like, teasing, no one quite knows where it may be going. | **89**

**AJ** | Pale, restrained pink, with silver glints. Refined and understated, but fewer fruit allusions than some, though there is a low organ swell of fruited warmth. Some nut, root spice. Real wine; unemphatic, complex. Yet oddly enough, on returning later, there is a reductive note that didn't seem to be there when first poured. Very good concentration and density here; fruited wealth, as well as vinous drive; salty edges. Complete and detaining; mouth-filling and long. There is even a hint of licorice behind the quiet red fruits. | **90**

**AR** | Pale onion-skin hue. This is fresh but quite shy in aroma, a tulip as yet unfurled. It has some pleasing rapsberryish fruit sweetness and a juicy enough texture, making it highly accessible right now, with a question mark over its staying power beyond the year. | **88**

## SURPRISINGLY FRUITY, WITH DRIED ORANGE PEEL AND APRICOT, THE ACIDITY PRESERVING WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK SHOULD BE A DEAD DODO BUT IS ANYTHING BUT

**Estandon Légende Côtes de Provence 2017** (13% ABV) | **89**

**SF** | A honeyed, oatmeal color, a quaint yet subtle luminosity. The wine is smoky, savory and surprisingly accessible; rosé wines after three or four years will either fall apart or, as in this case, transform themselves into food-friendly, often idiosyncratic "survivors," for want of a better word. This example has survived very well, the phenolic structure transformative and resourceful, the gastronomic potential undulled, probably intensified, all without compromising original intent. | **91**

**AJ** | Fascinating: This is frankly yellow now; not buttercup, but saffron. Did it begin life pink? Oaky and mellow, a touch waxy, a little bit animal; just a bit one-dimensional, though forceful and striking. A fascinating and worthwhile experiment. This is a mellow, mouth-filling wine, but the evanescent, fresco-like fruit has failed to keep up with the masterful oak. | **86**

**AR** | This is an appealing and unusual rose gold in color, and as soon as you smell the wine, it becomes obvious that the golden color stems from the oak, which brings buttered biscuit, spicy notes to a wine whose fruit is ripe, richly textured and nicely dry. It's a bit of a conundrum, because while the oak is pretty dominant, it's stylish oak, and so is the fruit and overall balance. Out to impress, it just about does its job. | **90**

**Domaine des Oullières Oh! Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2021** | **88**

**SF** | Soft sandstone color, watery at the rim. The aromatic has hints of raspberry ripple and cherry brandy; the most confected tasted to date (this one comes 11th in the random "batting order"), with residual sugar coming into play, or at least seeming to come into play. (2021 was not a famously ripe year in France!) Sappy at the same time... Approachable, very complete, but lacking the purity and capacity to develop as the best examples. | **86**

**AJ** | Very pale steel-pink. A little bit rawly reductive: taut and slightly estery. Time? Air? Will look a little later. The style is guarded. Actually better, more expansive and more impressive on the palate than the aromas suggested. The tight little nugget core of flavor is very well realized and satisfies. This wine has purity, drive, and depth. Excellent, finally. Better aromas would have inched up the score and may come with time. | **90**

**AR** | A pale salmon pink in hue. This shows fresh berry and subtle pear-drop-like notes in the aroma, even a note of *herbes de Provence*. There's a refreshing spritz on the tongue, an appealing cranberry-fruit sweetness combining with incisively fresh acidity in a balanced framework followed by an elegantly dry finish with a light, food-friendly (tuna tartare, since you ask) grip. | **89**

**Château Paquette Frejus Angelico Côtes de Provence 2020** (12.5% ABV) | **88**

**SF** | Ginger-yellow color, nothing remotely pink here—and an aromatic that is leafy and somewhat autumnal. Slate, incense, and a touch of bayleaf. The wine has evolved quickly, the acidity is stark and jagged, the vestigial fruit compromised by tertiary descriptors, none of which one would expect so soon, and none of which is especially laudatory. | **85**

**AJ** | A decided salmon hue to the color here: more yellow-orange than pink. Lovely nose: very mellow and melted. Peach, honeysuckle, and cream, and all very swimmy and serene. Grand nose. Quiet, of course. It certainly seems as if it is already an aged style, though it works well. Mouth-filling, soft, smooth, complete. Some clear evolution here: The fresh pink summer stone fruits are now autumnal and mallowy. A lovely drink just now, though it's true that I would finish up this wine this year. Gracious. | **90**

**AR** | A coppery pink color, almost light orange, showing some age already. There's a floral and herbal note in the aroma, possibly starting to show a bit of age, while the fruit is full-bodied with a lissom texture to it, albeit a tad on the austere side. | **88**

**Château Vignelaure Coteaux d'Aix en Provence 2008** (12.5% ABV) | **87**

**SF** | The oldest wine by far, that much we know... And with a suitable differentiation in terms of color, shape, and aromatic structure, all of which one should expect. A caramelized nose: orange peel, sour honey, autumnal leaves, and verbena. A museum piece, if you like, but rather revealing in terms of structural integrity and inherent harmony. | **90**

**AJ** | Now a pale translucent Mr Punch-like orange-red. Quite sweet and soupy-caramelly on the nose; malty too. Tiring a little; mothy. Fascinating, but I think we can conclude that this is not a wine style that improves with age. The palate more than confirms. Case concluded—but thanks to the producer of this excellent wine (when young, I'm sure) for the insight. | **81**  
**AR** | Looks like an orange wine with its massive depth of rose gold color; obviously evolved but by no means past it. In its aromatic profile, it comes across like a savory Seville orange marmalade, rich but dry, with a farm buttery underpinning. And it's surprisingly fruity to taste, with evolved, smoky, tertiary flavors of dried orange peel and apricot, the acidity preserving what you might think should be a dead dodo but, rather surprisingly, is anything but. A total one-off that shows that Provence rosé can age, even if it's not necessarily what Provence rosé is normally about. | **91**