

WINE BUSINESS MONTHLY

September 2015 • \$5.95

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Varietal Focus: **Rosé**

Winemakers Vary Varietals and Techniques to Achieve Stylistic Goals

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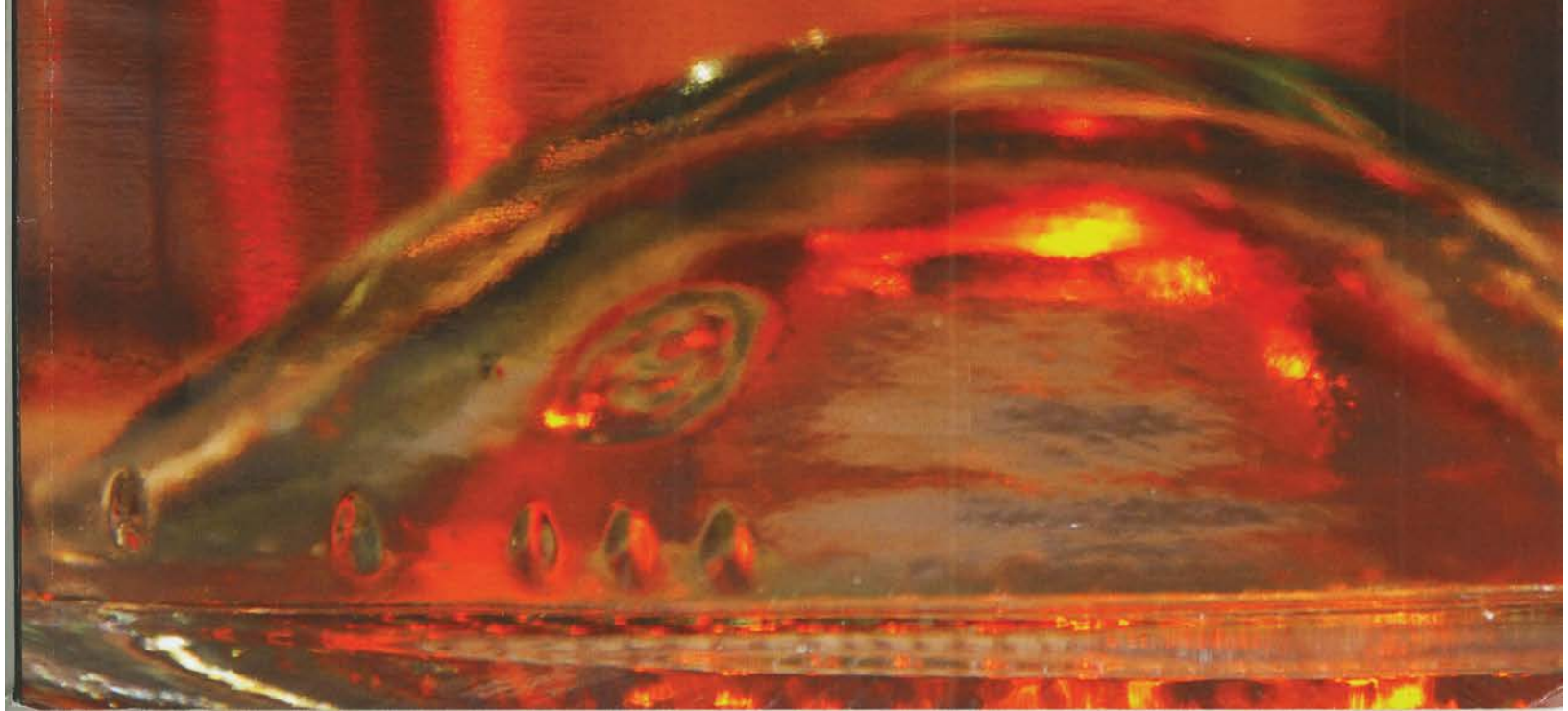
Selecting the Best Pump for the Winemaking Task
Saxum's New Tanks: The Tank is the Terroir
Mark Greenspan on Uneven Ripening in 2015

Product Review:

New Guide for Online Shopping Carts

Winemaking Trials:

Closure Consistency in Sauvignon Blanc
Takeaways from Testarossa Winery's Barrel Trials



Halter Ranch

2014 ROSÉ (71% GRENACHE, 9% SYRAH, 13% MOURVÈDRE, 7% PICPOUL BLANC), 13.6% ALC., 2,100 CASES, \$21

Kevin Sass graduated from Cal State Fresno with degrees in enology and agricultural business. He worked as the winemaker at Justin Winery, before moving to Halter Ranch in 2011 to run their wine program.

According to Sass:

“Our intent with the Rosé is to make a wine that is easy drinking, low in alcohol and expresses the varieties it is made from. We want a wine that is light and crisp yet maintains some weight on the palate. The wine should have good natural acidity that is maintained from beginning to end and goes well with food.

“Our vineyards have an elevation of 1,600 feet with calcareous clay loam soils and a south-facing exposure. Vines are planted 8x6 feet. The rootstock is all 1103, and we use Tablas Creek, Alban and M 315 clones. Our vineyard is irrigated and is Sustainability in Practice Certified (SIP).

“We shoot-thin, sucker and perform some light lateral removal. The portion of the vineyard going to Rosé gets less crop drop than the part going to red wine, usually keeping two clusters per shoot, but we do remove the wings. Usually, we average 3 tons per acre for the Rosé.

“To decide when to pick, we go by taste and analysis. Sugar levels and acid will be the primary determination. We shoot for 22° to 23° Brix and for the taste to veer away from herbal flavors. Tasting is important because it influences how long we cold-soak. The more tannic the skins, the less we will cold-soak, between 24 and 48 hours.

“If varieties are close enough to ripeness, we will field-blend; otherwise, we ferment lots separately. Grapes are hand-harvested at night into macro bins. All of our fruit is destemmed and sorted then returned to macro bins. The bins are moved to our cold room and held at 35° F for 24 to 48 hours, depending on phenolics. After cold-settling, we go to a bladder press, making cuts depending on color and pH. We settle juice for two days at 52° F then rack clean and add 4 pounds per 1,000 gallons of bentonite. We wait 24 hours, rack again and add Vin 13 yeast, which works well and is cold-tolerant. We ferment in stainless steel except for the Picpoul Blanc which is barrel-fermented.

“The natural acidity in the Picpoul Blanc means we don’t need to add acid to the wine. We make nutrient additions, as needed, at one-third fermentation. Two days after yeast inoculation, we will bubble medical grade oxygen, using a sparging stone through the juice to prevent reduction. We begin fermentation at 58° F, slowly working down to 52° F; but once we hit 6° Brix, we’ll allow the juice to warm up to 60° F to finish fermentation at full dryness. Fermentation usually lasts 14 to 16 days.

“We leave the wine on gross lees until it gets a bit stinky; then we rack clean. We cold-stabilize with carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC). We cross-flow filter and then sterile-filter at bottling. We taste the wine weekly to determine release dates, usually four to six weeks after bottling.”



Tasting Notes

Sass: It has a light watermelon color. There is no visible CO₂ in this, which is intentional. I get a combination of watermelon, kiwi and strawberry aromatics and a bit of citrus. It has a soft entry. The acid starts and completes the wine all the way through. There is not a lot of sharpness or angles to it. The flavors are wild strawberry, with a bit of framboise. It coats the mouth and finishes very clean with good acid that is not too sharp.

Poe: That strawberry and kiwi on the nose pop out nicely. The acid is prominent and pops enough to give it that berry sensation, along with a bit of minerality. The front palate is bright. It falls off on the mid-palate and finishes soft. The balance is nice on the front palate and mid-palate. It flows off the back palate nicely.

Brady: Bright, fresh and clean with that watermelon and strawberry, along with Granny Smith aromatics. It is not overripe at all but fresh and clean. In the mouth it is rounder than I expected. I like the way it is balanced with fresh acidity to finish it out.

Morgan: This is herbal with olive in the nose. It is steely with pretty good acidity and nice body. It finishes with a bit of orange peel essence. It has a bit of an oily quality that I find unusual, but it is quite nice. A bit more citrus or red fruit would make this great.

Rorick: Aromatically, I get a lot of white peach. On the attack, I got all of that olive and non-fruit character, which was quite a surprise. Eventually, the white peach aromas translated to the palate as well but not at the beginning. I liked Jeff’s comments on the orange oil, and the finish went a bit bitter for me, almost like pith from the orange.

Brockway: The first thing that got me was Parmesan cheese rind. It’s not jasmine, but there is some kind of night flower mixed in with that. On the palate there is some oily texture that kind of dominates the flavor.

Virnig: Aromatically, it was sort of peachy, but there were a lot of yogurt dairy notes in there. It reminded me of orange sherbet. It was pretty astringent with rigid phenolics, and it finished abruptly. It was a little out of kilter, and I definitely felt the alcohol on this one.

Mathis: This is high ester with elder flower and elderberry. The tannin is too high. I like the acidity, and the alcohol doesn’t bother me in and of itself; but when coupled with the grit from the phenolics, it turns into an elbow in my ribs. I like the CO₂ level. The ester and CO₂ both remind me of the Sinskey, but it is less refined.

Bilbro: The fruits are stone fruit. This seems to have a controlled reductive quality. The whole wine feels very controlled and very “made.” It has richness, phenolics, fruit and candied fruit. It has all the pieces, but for me, they are not in balance. I think lots of people would like it, though.

Data Sheet: *Rosé*

WINERY	Idlewild Wines	Mathis Wine	Halter Ranch
Wine	2014 "The Flower" Flora & Fauna Rosé	2014 Mathis Rosé de Granache	2014 Rosé
Blend	Nebbiolo, Dolcetto and Barbera, about one-third of each	100% Grenache	73% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvedre, 7% Picpoul Blanc
Winemaker	Sam Bilbro	Peter Mathis	Kevin Sass
Style Goals	Want to make a light, vibrant fresh wine with significant structure and balance	Provencal Rosé is model: light, dry, refreshing with low alcohol, tannin and bitterness. Light in color with a salmon hue	Express the varieties with an easy drinking, low alcohol wine. Should have bright fruit, good weight and natural acidity that is maintained from beginning to end
AVA	Mendocino County	Sonoma Valley	Paso Robles
Vineyard	Fox Hill Vineyard	Mathis Vineyard	Halter Ranch Vineyard
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant Geology (Soil Type)	Gravelly, sandy clay loam (Redvine)	Volcanic, balsalt and tuff	Calcareous clay loam
Elevation	700 feet	300 feet	1,600 feet
Vine Spacing	6x9 feet	6x4.5 feet	8x6 feet
Rootstock	Unknown	St. George	1103 P
Exposure	West, Northwest	South	South-facing hillside
Clones	Unknown	513, 515	Tablas Creek, Alban
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Lightly irrigated	Irrigation	Some irrigated, some dry-farmed
Farming (Organic, Biodynamic, Traditional)	Traditional	Traditional	SIP Certified
Production	3 to 4 tons per acre	4 tons per acre	3 tons per acre
Vineyard Practices	Minimal: early suckering, mowing, discing; Minimal spraying, no fruit drop or leaf pulling in normal years	Some thinning on weaker vines, but not much for vines designated for Rosé; some leaf pulling	Shoot thinning, suckering, light lateral removal
WINEMAKING DATA			
When to Pick	Taste first and foremost, then acid, then Brix	Taste	Based on analysis and tasting; sugar and acid levels primary determination; tasting determines cold soak length with tannin shortening time.
SO ₂	30 ppm addition going to barrel plus 10 ppm adjustment at bottling	35 ppm at press	20 ppm into cold soak bins
Crush Format	Whole cluster pressed	Field sorted and whole cluster pressed	All fruit is destemmed and sorted; crush fruit to half-ton macro bins for 24- to 48-hour cold soak in cold room dependent on tannin
Settle	No settling	Settled 2 days at 50° F and fined with Polyact pre-fermentation	2 day settle at 52° F
Yeast	Native	Zymaflore X5	Vin 13
Fermentation Temperature	Peaked at high 70s for a couple of days	55° F	Start at 58° F and work down to 52° F
Fermentation Technique	Ambient temperatures; Move to sun to bring up warmth through finishing	None	O ₂ addition 2 days after yeast inoculation
Nutrients	Fermaid O post lag and again halfway on one lot	Varies, added pre-fermentation	Made at 1/3 fermentation as needed
Acid Addition	None	DAP and Bioferm at 21° Brix	None needed; we pick early and use Picpoul Blanc to fine tune
Tank Types	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Racking	None	Once post fermentation, again post cold stabilization	Leave on gross lees until a bit stinky, then rack clean
Cold Stability	None	Yes	CMC
Heat Stability	None	Yes	Bentonite
Cork or Screw caps	Cork	Cork	Screw caps to preserve freshness of wine and prevent oxidation of color
Bottle-aging	1 month	1 month	4 to 6 weeks, based on weekly tasting
Filtration	Cross-flow	Sterile	Cross-flow