

Pink Supremacists

A rosé by any other name.

Being a wine detective is never boring. Every day, every night mires me in deep, disturbing human mysteries and miseries. Today's wine mystery involves the bad-rapping of the simple color, pink. Why? It's so pretty, kinda tender, gentle, soft.

Maybe that's part of the problem: in a culture of death-cults, blood-lust and perpetual war, we tend to associate pink with weakness and victimage, whereas we think of red as a color of power and lust, even lust for power (hence red



the terrifying chant "Pink Power!?" Instead of "White is might!" What? "Pink is pretty!" Scary, huh?

Same silly stuff happens in the weird world of wine: Most consumers think "white" wines are fine; even though they're mostly pale yellow to gold in color, when one pays 50 bucks for a decent Chablis, one can reasonably think of that wine as serious. Red wines, certainly, are deeper, stronger, more powerful. And pink wines are, well, uh, weak, insipid, dubious at best.

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"power ties" on politicians, business execs and other desktop "warriors"). Of course, commies are "reds" and nasty, but they're at least toting status as worthy enemies; worse, more contemptible are comsymps, called, naturally, pinkos.

Almost all other colors pack punch, or more than pink. Black is powerful, even a bit threatening, right? Blue's good; green's OK, maybe a bit iffy if we think about tree-hugging enviros. With orange we can get "crush," so it's got some knuckles, but pink ...?

We start the cultural color-coding early, don't we? Boy babies in blue, girl babies in pink. Imagine a red-blooded American family dressing baby Jason in pink. Eeeew, right? What football team hits the gridiron in pink? Ever heard of a tough military unit called the Pink Berets? Do cops hold a Thin Pink Line against crime? Which cowboy gunslinger tamed the West in a pink hat? Cutlass-wielding, ship-boarding, treasure-grabbing, maiden-ravishing pirates named Pinkbeard? (Johnny Depp excepted.)

Manly men don't wear plaid or pink; no, pink is definitely edgy, suggesting, in the words of Gropenführer Schwarzenegger, "girly men." Proud gays often delight in waving pink flags, like toreros' capes, in front of raging, ground-pawing homophobes, so there's at least some fun in pink.

But think: The idiots who originated the absurd idea of human "races" — the notion that not only could we box people by skin-color code, but that one color might be innately superior or dominant — came up with the sliding spectrum of white, yellow, red, brown, black. Without delving too deeply into this mental wreckage, let's return to the first category and face facts: There are no "white" humans. Sure, some percentage of the species got shorted on melanin, the skin-coloring chemical in our bodies; if we examine these people closely for their general color, we'd have to say, wouldn't we, that they are essentially — pink. Except, of course, when they are avidly tanning, conceiving themselves, oddly enough, as more attractive when they can achieve skin colors closer to yellow, red, or brown.

But can we grasp the possible consequences of accepting this fact? Can we conceive, for example, a bunch of tattooed prison thugs forming a Pink Aryan Brotherhood, dressing in brown shirts and black leather, thrusting stiff-armed Nazi salutes and raising

This vexes wine producers for several reasons: First, pink wines are quite traditional; France always made rosés. They're not thought of, usually, as serious, but they serve their purposes. When summer heat rises, few people want to cook or even eat very much, and hot-weather fare — cold meats, salads, chilled soups, etc. — can be overwhelmed by big reds. Too, decent rosés can deliver a flavor profile a bit spikier than most whites can provide; most rosés can be served chilled, are low in alcohol, but have enough acidity to complement food. Lastly, no small matter: Rosés are economically attractive; they don't demand the producer's best grapes, they're plentiful, they don't require a lot of fussing or expensive oak barrels or costly long corks; in fact, they're cheap.

But how to sell them to folks who shy away from taking pink wine to check-out? Some years ago, California marketeers invented the blush scam — and sold millions of cases of "blush" wines like "white" zinfandel "wine," as pal Mario put it, "for people who don't like wine." These "blushes" were — youbetcha — sweet, insipid. The scam continues, latest being "white" merlot.

Just doin' our job, we taste-tested **Beringer 2002 White Merlot** (\$6). Beringer is one of Napa's truly great producers; in fine vintages, Beringer cabernet sauvignon can reach classic scale. But their "white" merlot is cherry Kool-Aid with a slight kick, not horrible mind you, unless you like wine, or real rosé. They'll sell a zillion cases.

Try the good stuff instead: **Muga 2003 Rioja Rose** (\$11): Spanish, pale salmon color, lively acidity, zingy flavors.

Chateau d'Oupia 2003 Minervois (\$9.50): Lovely, pink as a dog's winky, flavors of cherries and strawberries, with spicy nip.

Bergerie de l'Hortus 2003 Rosé de Saignée (\$12.50); Yum. Jumps in the mouth: southern Rhone, got the flavors, pepper, acidity, huge value.

Andrew Rich 2003 Vi de Tabula Rasa (\$15): bit pricey but delish, bright, zesty blend of Oregon/Washington grapes. Love this guy.

Don't forget last month's raves, **Territorial 2003 Rose of Pinot Noir** (\$9) and **High Pass Pinot Noir Rosé** (\$10).

Don't blush, don't think, drink pink, be happy. **EW**

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