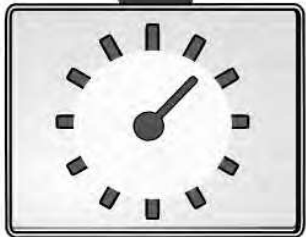


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Wine BY LANCE SPARKS

Pimping Pinks

Sassy sipping for delicate dining

My sidekick Mole was jumpy, pacing our scruffy office in full fret. Now, the Round Mound of Merlot, as we call him, is normally the sweetest, most optimistic guy you'd ever want to meet but the raging distemper of the wingnuts has him worried: "Sleut," — he calls me Sleuth; sweet, see? — "how're we gonna do dis? Weah goin' pink. Jes' da sound of the woid has all da neo-goons in Foxistan and Winglandia rushin' off to buy guns 'n' build jails. Dey're gonna come afta us, yellin' 'Socialism!'"

"Pal, even wingnuts tippie pink wines in summer. 'Course it's usually white zinfandel and we don't much cheer for syrupy schlock. That could be a problem. It doesn't take much to prod those goofs into goose stepping, but even Newties and Rushies let out a little slack when we're talkin' wine. We'll be safe — sorta."

Ten years we've been shouting the charms of rosés, pretty pink wines that deliver a dash more flavor than most whites, just for high-heat days and nights when big reds make most folks woozy. When we began trying to revive interest in rosés, even the best wine shops usually had a half-dozen or so on the shelves, and many of those were white zins, mostly cloyingly characterless.

Obviously, we had company in the pump for pinks, and the results have been gratifying. Today, a major wine shop might offer more than 30 pinks, from regions all over the world, where wide arrays of grapes, soils and styles produce tasty and distinctive pink quaffs. And it's all tied to revived interest in local foods and eating well.

Because, properly speaking, wine is food. It's intimately related to what we eat and when we eat it. The French, paragons of food-obsession, have long histories with

rosés of various regions, particularly in the southern valleys of the Rhone River, especially Provence, where high summer means sultry days, light foods and cool, light wines to match the bounty of fresh veggies and viands flowing from surrounding farms.

"Show da peeps da pretty pinks," Mole just said, bouncing on his toes.

One of the prettiest has to be **Patton Valley 2008 Pinot Noir Rosé** (\$16).

It pours so pale it's almost white but it leaps in the mouth, crisply dry with light cherry notes, then whiffs of strawberry overlaid with white flowers. Plays nicely with veggies, light meats, seafood; crisp acidity finds nuances in cheeses and cream sauces: Yum!

Eugene's own **Territorial 2008 Rosé of Pinot Noir** (\$12) is dark pink, almost ruby, bursting with raspberries. Match with picnic foods, barbecue, summer storms.

Also localfolks' **LaVelle Vineyards 2008 Dry Rosé of Gamay** (\$16) is deep pink with flavors that tilt toward raspberry, plus citrus top notes, finely balanced for rich cheeses, very nice. But while we're here, DO NOT MISS: **LaVelle's 2006 Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**, a shocker. Grapes come from Eastern Washington's Wahluke Slope, a prime site, and tastes as deep and rich as some of the best cabs we've tested. At \$28, the sticker might seem a bit stiff for some buyers but it's consistent with big reds of this quality. Only 476 cases were made, so it might disappear quickly. Not a summer wine, maybe, so make it a Christmas present — yours.

Happy Fourth, friends. Mole sez: Be safe, and wary of wingnuts with weapons. **EW**

Lance Sparks, Ph.D., teaches writing and literature at LCC.



Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type

*Adapted by James E. Grote
and George Howe
From the book by Doreen Cronin
Illustrations by Betsy Lewin*

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