

WINE TIM WHITE

A rosé by any other name

'Tis the season to be sampling – so sit back and enjoy the best holiday wines on offer.

An odd thing happened the other day: I drank a glass of rosé, several actually. I didn't taste the stuff as I'm wont to do as part of my professional duties, I just happily knocked back several frosty glasses. It was over a lazy lunch and the food, prepared by Adam Pizzini, was fabulous.

It just wasn't right to drink red, or beer, or white wine somehow: it was rosé day – and I can't say that I'm the most effusive spruiker of the style. But when the wine on offer goes by the mouth-watering name of Chrismont La Zona Rosato Mezzanotte – made with barbera, marzemino and sangiovese – how could you possibly not drink it?

It was while staying with friends at the beach over Christmas that I got to thinking I should be drinking a bit more of the pink stuff, as well as some well-chilled bottles of fresh whites, such as sauvignon blanc.

The thought of having to think about, as well as drink, a serious bottle of red was just not in the frame (unless it's nebbiolo, which is a great summer red). Even less could I imagine slurping on Christmas port, although an icy

glass of Manzanilla is certainly on the cards, along with some smart complex chardonnay, now that many of the better producers are eschewing buttery broad, malolactic fermentation styles for ones which are tighter and nuttier.

Now I know that there are people out there who drink full-throttle reds whatever the season, and real men who'll snigger at the mere mention of sauvignon blanc, including many of my wine-writing colleagues. But I came out of the sauvignon closet years ago, so the wines below are really the types that I wouldn't mind drinking over the holidays.

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2005 [Marlborough, NZ]

This is the best example of the iconic savvy for many a vintage. Deep, pure minerally cassis and nectarine smelling, while in the mouth it's zesty and pithy with peach and lemon peel. There's some mouth-watering pineapple too. Excellent weight and tang. 94/100, \$30.

Dominique Portet Sauvignon Blanc 2005 [Yarra Valley, Vic]

Quite a complex one this: tangy cumquat and currant, plus subtle spicy oak (or so it seems). Intense on the palate too, with grapefruit, tangerine and nettle flavours. Long and juicy. 92/100, \$23.

Juniper Crossing Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2005 [Margaret River, WA]

Tangy, herbal nettle gooseberry smelling with a touch of regional pesto: love the grapefruit pith as well. There's plenty of pith pear and nettley flavour too, with just the right amount of cut. Great value. 88/100, \$15-\$17.

Forest Hill Vineyard Unwooded Chardonnay 2005 [WA]

Fresh herbal, rocket and pear salad smelling. Good direct crunchy radicchio pear fruit with lovely mouth-watering acidity. Some nettley stuff too. Oh, that all unwooded chardonnay was this good. 88/100, \$17.

Hamelin Bay Five Ashes Vineyard Chardonnay 2004 [Margaret River, WA]

Smells of zingy tangerine and pineapple with some basil. Attacks with lots of curranty pineapple fruit, really slippery down the middle, and has beautiful balance, tightness, light oak smoke, nuts and Parmesan. This has to be one of the year's bargain quality chardonnays. Better than many double the price. 94/100, \$25.

Hungerford Hill Chardonnay 2004 [Tumbarumba, NSW]

This is seriously smart: fine oak, lemon peel and nectarine fruit. Really restrained. Zesty peel fruit in the mouth with fresh pear and



Scorpo rosé 2005, Mornington Peninsula

oak smokiness – a touch too smoky? Never mind there's long lime and pear fruit with a hint of fig. Damn good wine at a damn good price. 92/100, \$25.

Nugan Estate Frasca's Lane Pinot Grigio 2005 [King Valley, Vic]

Deep pears, with exotic wood spiciness. There's also a Gorgonzola dolce-like character. Good weight on the tongue, poached pear and stonefruit flavours and a flinty finish. 90/100, \$19.

Liquid Asset Sangiovese Rosé 2005 [McLaren Vale, SA]

There's peel and flinty smoke and sour cherry loganberry pips too. Excellent weight in the mouth with gooseberry pear tang and just the right amount of rosé chewiness. Really tasty – stonefruity to close. 90/100, \$18.

Scorpo Rosé 2005 [Mornington Peninsula, Vic]

Plump smelling – sweet-sharp strawberries – and really pretty. Attacks with succulent, sweetish fruit which builds down the middle becoming zesty but also sapid. There's some nuttiness in here too. Complex rosé. 92/100, \$25.

THREE GREAT WINE REGIONS BY THE SEA

Margaret River, Western Australia

The region's semillon and semillon sauvignon blanc wines are the perfect foil to the heat of the day, while cabernet sauvignon can be enjoyed when the afternoon sea breezes drop the temperature a notch or two.

Must-visit wineries: Voyager Estate, Cape Mentelle, Juniper Estate, Hamelin Bay, Leeuwin Estate.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

There are three grape varieties the region does especially well: pinot gris, chardonnay and pinot noir. The latter is the perfect red for summer.

Must-visit wineries: Willow Creek Vineyard, Port Phillip Estate, Paringa Estate, Main Ridge, 10 Minutes by Tractor.

McLaren Vale, South Australia

Port Willunga is a great place to hang out over summer. It's relaxed and the beaches remarkably uncrowded considering the numbers that flock there. McLaren Vale's increasingly hot, massively fruited reds are perhaps not best suited to summer but there's plenty of excellent white to cool things down.

Must-visit wineries: Penny's Hill, d'Arenberg, Samuel's Gorge (stunning views of Ongaparanga Gorge), Coriole (an incredible array of wines, including Australia's first Fiano), Wirra Wirra.