

wine

A good rosé needs to have more than a pretty face: it needs texture, structure and complexity. By **Tim White**.

"It is said of rosés," wrote the late, great, French oenologist Emile Peynaud, in his classic work *The Taste of Wine*, "that their colour is half their charm." Among the dozens of acceptable hues noted by Peynaud are (reasonably enough) rosé, pale red, true rose, violet rose and orange rose. Then there are other more exotic tints in his list including salmon, grey (as in vin gris) and also onion skin. He doesn't mention partridge eye, but other authorities have espied it in a rosé context.

Not that I've ever got close enough to a live partridge to know, but even if I had I doubt that I'd truly appreciate such a subtle shading. You see, I'm one of the 10 to 20 per cent of (Caucasian) males who are colourblind (or as it's probably better phrased in these PC days, "colour vision challenged"). I've known this since I was a kid, when my Ishihara test performance returned a result of red-green colourblindness.

This "impairment", you'll be reassured to learn, hasn't caused me too many problems when it comes to wine evaluation. At the odd wine show I've missed occasional "pinking" or "browning" in white wines (caused by oxidation), but as I always pay more attention to the smell and taste of a wine anyway, there's never any problem identifying oxidised wines and scoring them accordingly. Thinking about it, my lack of reverence for colour might explain why I don't give a damn about the depth of pigmentation in low anthocyanin black varieties such as pinot noir and nebbiolo. If it smells good and tastes good, where's the problem?

Having said all this, I must admit to having an issue with the increasing number of really lurid, neo-fluoro rosés that have proliferated as the style has come back into fashion.

It's almost as if some winemakers were producing them with the colourblind in mind. But the taste soon gives these garish, "light red" rosés away. My preference, in colour at least, is for those that Peynaud might describe as more russet or autumnal in hue.

Mornington Peninsula producer Scorpo has got its '05 rosé just right, I reckon, both colour-wise and flavour-wise. It's got juicier fruit than the '04 edition, although it has lost nothing in the way of texture and complexity. "The object," Paul Scorpo tells me, "is to make an old-fashioned style. We also want to capture the essence of pinot and so are looking to get the structure and texture in the mouth." He works closely with winemaker Sandro Mosele (of Mornington Peninsula winery Kooyong) to achieve this. This year the wine was wild yeast-fermented in its entirety in old oak barrels.

And the colour? "Well, the colour we get really pedantic about," Scorpo continues, "and we keep checking the wine all through maceration until we like the look of it. Then we're tasting it to see how the tannins are coming out and what the texture is like." This, according to Scorpo, changes almost hourly, so they have to be careful not to let the juice macerate too long.

"A pomegranate rose colour" is the ideal hue to see in the glass, says Scorpo, "an ancient rose sort of colour". And as a landscape architect, Scorpo knows a bit about roses and the importance of colour.

All of which may be a bit lost on me given my aforementioned predisposition. But if colour is half a rosé's attraction, and I pay so little attention to it, then I'm not swayed (too much) when I review it. It's the smell and taste that charm me.



Yering Station ED Pinot Noir Rosé 2005 Yarra Valley, Vic, \$19 (Randall the Wine Merchant). Lovely fresh bright fruits, smells of sappy pinot noir, plus damp earth and a nettley tang. Lovely peach kernel flavours in the mouth, wafts of rose and pear too, and gentle tannins among the fruit slipperiness. Excellent weight and texture. Really stylish and great value.



Scorpo Rosé 2005 Mornington Peninsula, Vic, \$25 (Rathdowne Cellars). Lovely, plump smelling sweet-sharp strawberry fruit – really pretty. Attacks with succulent, sweetish fruit which builds down the middle, becoming zesty but also sapid. Complex and subtle rosé.



Kiss Chasey Rosé 2005 Western Australia, \$14 (Vintage Cellars). Quite a pale copper pink. Fragrant and pippy smelling, with some preserved lemon and toffee. Attacks gentle, easy and then builds gentle grip around the juicy redcurrant core. There are some candy-like properties too, but it finishes nice and dry with wafts of flinty smokiness. Damn good.



Chateau Guiot Rosé 2004 Costieres de Nimes, France, \$20 (Prince Wine Store). Complex rhubarb and prosciutto nose – not simply fruit-primary. Excellent weight in the mouth: creamy and vinous, with flavours of marzipan and fruitcake. Really long to finish.



Innocent Bystander Pinot Rosé 2005 Yarra Valley, Vic, \$15 (King & Godfree). Really pretty perfumed nose: creamy scented, with tangy orange and blackberry and strawberry pip, too. Attacks surprisingly savoury for the sweetness indicated by the nose, and becomes silky and cherry-strawberry fruity. Excellent weight and fleshiness with a salty, tangy finish.