



# Provence

GOOD ROSÉ CAN BE ENJOYED ALL YEAR ROUND

*Grown in a naturally blessed region enhanced by sunshine and an outstanding location, Provence rosés are truly one of France's flagship offerings. Their remarkable quality makes them extremely palatable, not just in summer but all year round, in Provence and elsewhere.*

By Jean-Paul Burias

Photographs: all rights reserved - Fotolia: © odilepascal

# PROVENCE - REGION -

It has now become a quintessentially French ritual. Pavement cafés abuzz with the sound of chatter and cicadas as patrons savour a good glass of rosé. This captivating setting is where Provence rosés hold pride of place within the French wine proposition. These sun-kissed wines labelled with a number of appellations (AOCs) reflect the region's lifestyle. The coastal strip is home to granite schist soils whilst the Permian depression situated on the northern edge of the Maures mountain range is formed of clay and sand, and the Triassic plateau reveals a predominant limestone streak. These naturally endowed soils produce lightly-coloured, quality rosés that drink well on any occasion. "The market moved forward when consumers realised that rosé is a wine in its own right and not a mixture or a summer-only drink", points out Henri Fabre Bartalli, general manager and owner of Domaines Fabre. "Winegrowers have continued to make progress in the winery, and mentalities are changing. More sustainable vineyard management has emerged and quality is now favoured over quantity". Winemaking techniques have changed and equipment focuses more on the fruit, controlled temperatures and the quintessential features of each varietal. The wine regions of Provence are easily identifiable, recognised and well-known and they combine elegance and technical expertise. This is bolstered by proactive PR and an approach to marketing that is not afraid to showcase modern livery and highly attractive packaging.

## QUANTUM LEAPS IN QUALITY AND EXPERTISE

Since the 1960s, the appellation has made quantum leaps in quality and in responding to consumer tastes, promoting Provence rosés as an assertive brand name. The Provence wine marketing board (CIVP) has pushed progress forward, as has the Centre du Rosé which promotes advances in winemaking skills and cellaring. "Over the last 20 years, producers have made their winemaking techniques more precise, learnt to realise the potential of their soils and to get the best out of their grape varieties", stresses Laurence Berlemont, founding partner of the Provence Agronomy Agency. "Provence rosés now boast real character and typicity.



The entrance to Château La Clapière



Château La Clapière's rosés

# PROVENCE

- REGION -



Domaine de l'Allamande facing the Hyères islands and Porquerolles

## DOMAINE DE L'ALLAMANDE SET IN PROVENCE'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE

The view is breathtaking. 400 metres above sea level, facing due South and overlooking the 'Golden islands' including Porquerolles, Domaine de l'Allamande is surrounded by a listed forest planted to Mediterranean species. The wind-swept estate, bought in 2013 by the Quiroga family, covers 115 hectares with 30 hectares of bearing vineyards. Its broad-ranging array of soil types imbue the wines with myriad aromas. History has it that Provence's original wines came from the Pierrefeu area that is renowned for its authenticity and bountiful nature. The land forms a triangle between the towns of Cuers, Puget and Pierrefeu, the famous golden triangle of the Côtes de Provence, hence the name of the top-flight label, Triangle d'Or. This blend of Grenache, Cinsault and Rolle is a beguiling sight for the eye with its superb lychee-pink hue. Its explosive nose offers up a multi-faceted aromatic spectrum of citrus and tropical fruits and the impressive structure on the palate melds minerality with silkiness. Also sporting a pretty pale pink hue, Héritage displays superb complexity with a palate that is silky yet mineral and has a very balanced finish. Noémie, which was awarded a gold medal in the 2017 Gilbert & Gaillard competition, exudes aromas of citrus and red fruits with a beautiful smooth structure on the palate.

## DOMAINES FABRE – A FAMILY SAGA

Domaines Fabre play a pivotal role in Provence and are the perfect illustration of a quality-driven, family-owned estate. The largest family-run vineyard in Var, the property boasts 550 hectares under vine and several estates spread over the Pierrefeu-du-Var, La Londe des Maures and Hyères area. Bought by Henri and Charlotte Fabre in 1928, Château de la Clapière was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the remains of a Roman then Knights Templar site. The chateau's vineyards are like a Garden of Eden, basking in a coastal micro-climate which imbues wines from the 55-hectare vineyard – 32 of which are listed as Cru Classé – with generous aromatics. The excellence that prevails here is echoed in the high standards of Château de l'Aumérade. Although wine first appeared here in the first century AD, it was only in the 16th century under King Henry IV that it experienced a resurgence. Bowled over by this beautiful location and the quality of its wines, the King ordered his minister, the Duke of Sully, to take the wines to the French court and



Henri and Bruno Fabre Bartalli

# PROVENCE

- REGION -

plant, on February 15, 1594, France's first mulberry tree along with the magnificent plane trees that still line the chateau's terrace. In the 18th century, this superb property was bought by the Aumérat family and was named Château de l'Aumérade; it was subsequently acquired by Henri Fabre in 1932. As one of the first to bottle wines and a founder of the Côtes de Provence, Henri Fabre and his wife Charlotte restructured the chateau and in 1955 were awarded Cru Classé status. With the help of their son Louis Fabre, they developed the marketing side of the business and exports. In 1956, Charlotte Fabre designed a unique bottle, one of the first in Provence, inspired by Emile Gallé's cameo glass. The wine was labelled Marie-Christine and was hugely successful. Following in the footsteps of her grandfather and father, Marie-Christine Fabre-Grimaldi and her husband Vincent perpetuate the family traditions, drawing on 400 years of passion and outstanding rosés exuding subtle aromas and a full, silky palate. "Rosé has always accounted for 80% of our sales, which is totally logical", comments Henri Fabre Bartalli, general manager and owner. "Only Provence can produce the kind of rosés we have and we need to take advantage of this unique attribute. Very good reds will never compete with rosé. However, Provence rosés are extremely popular, reds less so and whites even less, except for the smaller estates that sell their wines locally".

## DOMAINE BUNAN – KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Heirs to a tradition of wine growing that started with the father and grandfather, the Bunan family strives for excellence on its estates with love and dedication. In 1961, Paul and Pierre Bunan fell in love with the Bandol area. Laurent, Paul's son, was the first of a new generation of wine growers. For the past thirty years, he has travelled the world to promote Bandol and expand export sales in numerous countries. Françoise, his sister, focuses on marketing and PR and has made art a priority. "The outstanding quality that rosé develops in Bandol has secured genuine renown", she says. "Wine growers are extremely attentive to winemaking. Consequently, the heavenly colour of our rosés and their inimitable fruity taste have opened up markets worldwide". These top-end rosés are also cellar-worthy. The quality of the Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Grenache grapes gives them outstanding roundness and freshness. There is no doubt that if Côtes de Provence rosés are gems in Provence's crown, Bandol is its uncut diamond.



One of the magnificent rooms at Château La Clapière



Domaine Bunan has a genuine family history