

## Southern France, pink, sparkling and sweet

**Our second southern France wine round-up is mostly pink, with a handful or two of sparkling wines and just three little sweeties at the end.**



When it comes to fizz in the south of France, Limoux is undisputed queen, producing three quite different styles. The delicate, low-alcohol Méthode Ancestrale Blanquette with its gentle sweetness is dismissed too often as a simple wine. That is not necessarily so, and I wish it were easier to find. I would drink it often if I could. Mauzac-based Blanquette de Limoux is the region's oldest sparkling style. It's dry and distinctive, its apple-peel-and-grass character making it defiantly different from any other sparkling wine. Antech produces the benchmark. Crémant de Limoux, based on Chardonnay and Chenin (Pinot Noir and Mauzac optional), is more champagne-like, although can also be distinctive because of the Chenin. Quality ranges from light, quaffable fizz to some pretty serious wines. Antech, again, has produced a gorgeous 2013 crémant called Grande Cuvée Oubliée. Well worth the small premium. I'm watching Rives-Blanques with great interest here because their new sparkling cuvée, Saphir, is a stunning wine. Still wines have always been their métier; are they going to start being known for their fizz? Two of my favourite sparkling wines here were light-hearted and only lightly sparkling – the Daumas Gassac Frizant, which was my wine of the week in April, and the most irresistible pet-nat from Mas Lasta. Both of them made me, quite simply, happy. More pet-nat from the south, please!

It's not often one gets to compare a wide range of Provence and Languedoc rosés side by side. The general assumption is inevitably that Provence will outshine its western neighbour by some margin. As I noted in Southern France, the whites, Brand Provence comes with a premium that I really don't think is worth paying in most cases. The two Provence rosés that I did rate highly were both from Domaine des Diables: L'Hydropathe Élite Rosé 2020 and Rose des Bois 2019. But at £21 and £34 respectively, they ought to be good!

There were inevitably plenty of light, drinking-without-thinking rosés, but a number of producers have the vision to get beyond that boring old cliché and are producing exciting, serious, foodie rosés. My rosettes would go to Bassac, Ch La Négly, La Lauzeta, Ch Fabre Gasparets, Domaine Montrose and Terre des 2 Sources. This last rosé is, hands-down, the best food-pairing wine I tasted right across the board of this southern France tasting, and up there with one of the foodiest food wines I've ever tried period.

The 13 sparkling wines, 57 rosés and three sweeties are so-grouped below and are then presented in alphabetical order by producer (sur)name but they can be ordered by score or appellation if you prefer.



## **Mas de Daumas Gassac, Rosé Frizant Mousseux 2019 Vin de France**

By Tamlyn Currin

Full bottle 1,535 g. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Mourvèdre, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon, Petit Manseng, Muscat - 11%

Quite frankly, delightful! Tamarillo, guava, salt, tomato jam, blood orange. Flavours and layers pinging and colliding across the palate – you can almost hear the shouts of unfettered laughter. Sumac and paprika dance in a hot popping popcorn pot. Papaya tastes silky and weighty and yet there is a racy edge. This was absolutely divine with Ottolenghi's grilled courgette, feta and cascabel honey salad.

**SCORE: 17**