

## Worksheet Twenty Seven

# IN THE PINK

Before purchasing your champagnes (from a reputable merchant with fast turnover), be very sure that they have been stored well, as rosé seems particularly prone to bottle faults. Clear glass bottles – first used by Gosset for its rosé in 1947 – are now often used to display the colour of rosé champagnes. But they are not the best friends of rosé, as wines exposed to light may fall victim to *goût de lumière*, which will not leave a good taste (Chapter Three). The champagnes may be tired and lifeless, with little bouquet. Always store clear bottles in an opaque wrapping, or leave them in the box or treated cellophane in which the producer placed them.

The champagnes suggested below are examples of Methods Two and Three of rosé production. Select the number of bottles required.

- » Taittinger Prestige Rosé Brut NV (Method Two)
- » Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosée Brut NV (Method Three)
- » G.H. Mumm Brut Rosé NV (Method Two)
- » Piper-Heidsieck Rosé Sauvage Brut NV (Method Two)
- » Fleury Rosé de Saignée Brut NV (Method Three)
- » Larmandier-Bernier Rosé Saignée Brut Premier Cru NV (Method Three)

Note: If you have trouble finding these wines, other examples are listed at the end of the Worksheet.

If in a group, try the first two rosé champagnes ‘unmasked’, then the remaining four champagnes can be masked, their labels hidden. With your experience from the first pair, it might be fun – though difficult – to assess whether the champagnes have been made by the *saignée* method or by the addition of red wine.

The first two, the benchmark champagnes, are Taittinger Brut Prestige Rosé NV (Method Two) and Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosée Brut NV (Method Three, *saignée*).<sup>1</sup> To help detect the difference between the masked wines – to decide where red wine has been added, and where the *saignée* method has been used – save a little of each in your glasses for comparison with the next pairing.

### 1. Taittinger Brut Prestige Rosé NV

*Approximately 30% Chardonnay, 55% Pinot Noir, 15% Meunier; includes 15% still red wine, Pinot Noir sourced from Les Riceys, Loches-sur-Ource, Ambonnay and Bouzy.*

Champagne Taittinger’s cellars are in Reims, beneath the ancient Abbey of St Nicaise, which was destroyed during the French Revolution. The cellars were initially dug in the Gallo-Roman period and extended by the Benedictine monks in the thirteenth century.

### 2. Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosée Brut NV

*100% Pinot Noir saignée*

Champagne Laurent-Perrier notes that its rosé is famous for its highly expressive bouquet, which stems from the very careful preservation of the grape’s natural fresh red fruit aromas. Unusual at the time, the House decided to try a secondary fermentation with its rich still red wine, their *côteaux champenois*, and following further experimentation, 1968 saw the first release of the newly developed style, which was then a rarity. Blended from fruit sourced from mainly Grand Cru villages in the Montagne de Reims – including particular plots (even selected crus, vines and clones) in Bouzy, Ambonnay, Louvois, the southern area of Tours-sur-Marne, Verzy, Verzenay and the northern part of Mailly, Selected bunches are de-stemmed prior to maceration. It is one of the few Grande Marque rosé champagnes

to be made using the maceration (skin contact) technique, which gives it an extraordinary depth and freshness: features that have made it a benchmark rosé champagne. Controlled maceration lasts 48–72 hours, depending on the quality of the harvest. This technique helps the extraction of colour and the development of the Pinot Noir’s full aromatic richness. Time on lees extends to at least four years (six years for magnums). The classic beauty of the embossed seventeenth century–style ‘Henri IV’ bottle completes the picture.

Consider:

- » Vinosity (said to be more evident with addition method)
- » Tannins (said to be more evident with *saignée*)
- » Fruitiness (said to be more evident with *saignée*)
- » Storage potential (said to be more evident with *saignée*). Good indicators are: powerful fruit, acidity, tannins which need softening with time and vibrant colour which might not fade too much.

Use a number 1 (least) to 10 (most) as a prompt.

**Taittinger Brut Prestige Rosé NV (addition method)**

Appearance .....

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Nose .....

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Palate .....

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Vinosity 1–10 ..... Tannins 1–10 ..... Fruitiness 1–10 ..... Storage potential? 1–10 .....

Food match .....

Conclusion .....

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**Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosée Brut NV (*saignée*)**

Appearance .....

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Nose .....

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Palate .....

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Vinosity 1–10 ..... Tannins 1–10 ..... Fruitiness 1–10 ..... Storage potential? 1–10 .....

Food match .....

Conclusion .....

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Could you detect differences between the possibly attributable to the method of making?

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Now try these champagnes, masked, in pairs:

**3. G.H. Mumm Rosé Brut NV**

**4. Larmandier-Bernier Rosé Saignée Brut Premier Cru NV**

and

**5. Piper-Heidsieck Rosé Sauvage Brut NV**

**6. Fleury Rosé de Saignée Brut NV**

Complete the tasting worksheets.

**Champagne 3**

Appearance .....

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Nose .....

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Palate .....

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Vinosity 1–10 ..... Tannins 1–10 ..... Fruitiness 1–10 ..... Storage potential? 1–10 .....

Food match .....

Conclusion .....

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*Saignée*: Yes / No

**Champagne 4**

Appearance .....

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Nose .....

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Palate .....

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Vinosity 1-10 ..... Tannins 1-10 ..... Fruitiness 1-10 ..... Storage potential? 1-10 .....

Food match .....

Conclusion .....

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*Saignée*: Yes / No

Unmask and have a look.

Any comments?

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**Champagne 5**

Appearance .....

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Nose .....

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Palate .....

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Vinosity 1-10 ..... Tannins 1-10 ..... Fruitiness 1-10 ..... Storage potential? 1-10 .....

Food match .....  
Conclusion .....

*Saignée*: Yes / No

### Champagne 6

Appearance .....

Nose .....

Palate .....

Vinosity 1–10 ..... Tannins 1–10 ..... Fruitiness 1–10 ..... Storage potential? 1–10 .....

Food match .....

Conclusion .....

*Saignée*: Yes / No

Unmask again. Was it hard to work out? .....

Comment on your preference, the range of shades of colour, the level of sweetness across the range, and which you felt were serious wines.

*Saignée* styles are less rare than they were, especially among *Récoltants Manipulants*. Substitute other examples from the list below if you cannot find the rosé champagnes suggested (Dom Pérignon Rosé is sometimes made in this style, depending on the ripeness of the year). Bear in mind Richard Juhlin's comment: that grower champagnes from the best Pinot Noir villages can often reach their peaks as a rosé<sup>2</sup>.

- » **Louis Roederer Vintage 'Cristal' Rosé** is always *saignée*.
- » **Champagne Devaux**, the large grower cooperative, hedges its bets with three differently assembled NV rosés from its Pinot-dominant vineyards in the Aube. The '**Rosé Intense**' features 100 per cent Les Riceys Pinot Noir *saignée* macerated for three days. Its prestige rosé is **Cuvée 'D'**.
- » **Champagne Collard-Picard**, from Villers-Chatillon in the Marne Valley, makes the aptly named '**Cuvée des Merveilles**' **Premier Cru** blended from 20 per cent Chardonnay and 80 per cent single-vineyard Vertus Pinot Noir macerated on its skins for 60–70 hours.

- » **Champagne Roger Brun** from Äy, the same village as Bollinger, makes a **Brut Rosé Premier Cru NV** using a blend of Pinot Noirs from Mareuil-sur-Äy (think Philipponnat's 'Clos des Goisses') and Mutigny. Highly regarded by Michael Edwards.<sup>3</sup>
- » **Drappier 'Grande Sendrée' Vintage Rosé** (90 per cent Pinot Noir *saignée*) or '**Val des Demoiselles**' (100 per cent Pinot Noir).
- » **Champagne G. Fluteau** (from Gyé-sur-Seine) '**Carte Rubis' Rosé NV** (100 per cent Pinot Noir).
- » **Champagne Henri Mandois** (Pierry) **Rosé Grande Réserve**, a blend of *saignée* and addition method (and a Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Meunier blend).
- » **Champagne Guy Michel** (Pierry) **Brut Rosé NV** (100 per cent Pinot Noir).
- » **Champagne De St Gall Brut Rosé Grand Cru** (100 per cent Pinot Noir).
- » **Champagne René Geoffroy** (Cumières and Damery) **Brut Rosé Vintage** (100 per cent Pinot Noir).

A few more, authorial favourites: Charles Heidsieck NV or Vintage Rosé, Bollinger Rosé, Gosset Grande Rosé, Coessens 'Largillier' 100 per cent Pinot Noir Rosé *saignée* and Besserat de Bellefon 'Cuvée des Moines' Rosé.

Like to try Method One with the same blend of cuvées and the same dosage, whether white or rosé NV? Heidsieck & Co. Monopole, Legras & Haas, Lenoble, Georges Vesselle, A. Desmoulins

#### ENDNOTES

1. See also Laurent-Perrier in Ch. 24, 'Grandes Marques'.
2. Richard Juhlin, *4000 Champagnes*, Editions Flammarion, Paris, 2004.
3. Michael Edwards, *The Finest Wines of Champagnes: A Guide to the Best Houses, Cuvées and Growers*, Aurum Press Ltd., London, 2009, pp. 156–7.