

# WINE News

*Join us in deep Europe: where Zinfandel is Crljenak, Riesling is dry, and the wine of the Rhine also flows red.*



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## The Rosé Train: It's a First Class Ticket

By Eric Story

If asked what I think is the most exciting thing going on in the wine world today, I would most definitely say it is the amazing wealth of **high-quality rosé that is now available**. In the last few years we have seen an absolute boom in the category. And I'm not just talking about the rosés from the south of France, which is what most people first think of when they hear "rosé." No. I'm talking about the rosé revolution that is happening all over the winegrowing world. Rosé is no longer being produced as an afterthought. It is being made with well-conceived care and attention. We are seeing all kinds of different grape varieties being used, and even more exciting is the number of countries now producing top-notch rosé wine. Sure, rosé is a fun and festive wine to drink whenever, and on its own. But, it also happens to be some of the best food pairing wine, as well. Trust me on this: if you are ever in doubt of what to drink with your meal, go with rosé. It works every time! I've actually gotten my wife so hooked on the stuff, she gets angry with me if I don't keep at least two bottles in the fridge at all times.

### 2014 Richou "L'Rosé" Loire Rosé (\$14.99)

Here's a rosé of serious depth of fruit, not least because it's a blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc. If you are looking for a rosé with a little more heft and structure, this is the one. A perfect wine if you're looking for something a little lighter than a red but not as delicate as a typical rosé.



### 2014 Jean Teiller Menetou-Salon Rosé

**(\$14.99)** 100% Pinot Noir. Talk about a rosé with elegance and class. It's a beautiful color of pink coral, with a fine and delicate nose. The balance between fruit texture, mineral and finishing vibrancy is absolutely perfect.

### 2014 Holzapfel "Pink" Rosé Wachau (\$16.99)

100% Zweigelt. Intense in color and character alike. The aromatic is bounding with loads of red berries and spice, and the same character carries right along the palate. Bright and fresh, with vibrant acidity and rich minerality. I was so thrilled the first time I was able to taste this fantastic rosé that I remember exactly where I was, the time of day and what little food pairing was served with it.

### 2014 Gunderloch "Fritz's Rosé" Rheinhessen

**(\$13.99)** This refreshing German pink is made from 95% Pinot Meunier and 5% Portugieser, and has just a minute touch of residual sugar, which makes this a stellar pairing for something spicy. Bright and aromatic red fruits carry all the way through to the core of this refreshing and quaffable rosé. Fantastic with spicy, grilled sausages, or even a watermelon, arugula and feta salad.

### 2014 Zafeirakis Rosé Thessaly (\$11.99)

100% Limniona. Not only one of my top Greek rosé picks, also one of my top rosé bottlings in general. Bright cranberry and other red fruits with spice and subtle mineral cut on the mid-palate. Has a juicy core of fruit that is bright and refreshing on the palate.

# Five Wines in Five Countries: An Eclectic Tour of European Wines

By Mahon McGrath

I once had the idea that it would be fun to proximately retrace author Patrick Leigh Fermor's trek through Europe, as detailed in *A Time of Gifts* and *Between the Woods and the Water*, bibulously. Embedded within notes on present-day wines from areas he visited could be bits both luminous and humorous from that memoire-cum-travelogue. And then...I woke up. Despite the romance of the idea, the scope was quite obviously well beyond anything I could be called upon to produce, and finishing such an endeavor might eventually have spun to spans of time almost Fermorian in length.

Instead, in the spirit of one of those spurious assertions before a fiction that it is "based on real events," I offer for your consideration five wines from five countries, on a west-to-east trajectory, "based on pure fantasy," the only real continuity between them being their delectability, and my desire to make them more broadly known. Any similarity to any Mittel-European trip, real or imagined, is purely coincidental. Now, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag...

From Weingut Rosi Schuster, in Austria's Burgenland, comes a fantastic **2013 Rosi Schuster Blaufränkisch Burgenland (\$19.99)**. Geranium, pepper, and a hint of smoky meat sally from the glass, and those characteristics carry through to the palate, joining forces with dark berry fruit that doesn't quite push through to cassis; the meatiness, meanwhile, resolving in an olive direction. Tasting this blind, you might be forgiven for imagining you had a sleek, polished northern Rhône red in your glass. The tannins are gentle, and the wine, while plumply medium-bodied, is more acidic than rich. The mid-palate features a pleasing bit of legerdemain, wherein a certain sweetness rallies briefly before disappearing as evanescently as it came, yielding the floor to the tart, peppery dimension once more. A hand for Hannes (Schuster, winemaker), please!

Once upon a time, all I knew about from Slovenia were the musical tricksters Laibach. Now, with the **2014 Crnko "Jarenincan" Slovenia (\$13.99)**, I am happy to report that I can say I know of two things. Ah, progress! Composed of Laski Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Ravenec, and Muscat, this value white blend really knocks it out of the park. No, there isn't anything to ponder over here, unless the question is: "Do I have another glass?" This is good, straightforward, F-U-N. The aromatics are, I think, what does it for me. A little bit floral, a little bit honeyed, a little bit citrus, a little bit stone fruit. I've certainly paid more for less. Take a sip, and the wine is easy, moderately sweet, with enough acidity to brighten things, but nothing that's liable to scour the insides of your cheeks. The low alcohol doesn't hurt, either, since you will be having multiple servings. The only shame here is that we probably won't sell as much of this as we ought to, considering the quality-to-price ratio. Too few vowels, and it's tucked away in an odd corner. It is, hands down, one of the best liter bottle whites I've tasted in recent memory.



Zinfandel is dead; long live Tribidrag! The genealogical sleuthing that, over a span of decades, ultimately traced Zinfandel's roots all the way back to Croatia (from Zinfandel to Primitivo to Crljenak Kastelanski to Tribidrag), has been chronicled in detail elsewhere. The question is: what does a modern expression of an antique varietal in its old home bring to the table? Plenty. While **Dubrovački Podrumi's 2012 Crljenak (\$19.99)** will seem familiar to those acquainted with Zinfandel in its Californian guise, the difference is striking. While the bright, extroverted aromas of dark cherry, roast plum, and blackberry fruit laced with resin and pepper hardly sound like alien territory, when it comes to the structure, the similarity ends. It's puckery and tangy in texture, giving the wine a fresher, less opulent air. I can think of a few domestic producers whose Zins highlight the varietal's strong natural acidity, but not more than a handful. Dry spice with an anise edge, and low tannins, round out the proceedings.

"Hungary" for more? Oh, just lost your appetite? I don't blame you. Still, **Spiegelberg's 2011 "Wedding Night Wine" (\$32.99)**, from Somló, is worth sticking around for. In brief, this blend of Juhfark, Hárslevelű, and Furmint was thought to guarantee the birth of a male heir when consumed before the marriage was consummated. Though it is doubtful that it ever worked as intended, and without any endorsement as such, there is no doubt that under the influence of such a richly seductive wine, a great many things are conceivable. The smoky peach, wet slate, candied grapefruit peel and spice notes have mass and force. This is a big, bold wine. It moves on to dusty lemon, floral, and balsamic flavors, with woody, vetiver-ish accents to the finish. I want to equate it to some better known quantity, but it is very much its own special thing, and a real treat to discover.

At last, a wee something to Greece the skids: **2013 Troupis "Fteri" Moschofilero Peloponnese (\$12.99)** from Fteri. Pristine and perfectly dry, it is like a bouquet of summer blossoms, neatly focusing on that component of aromatics you might find in a Riesling, a Muscat, or a Gewürztraminer. If not profound, for an inexpensive white wine, it's pretty darn compelling. It hits you like a forest turned crimson, yellow, and orange, set against a robin's egg blue sky, with the simple brilliance of its presence. If it doesn't have a deeper narrative, that doesn't subtract from its attractiveness.

Speaking of narrative lack, I'm out of wind. Or is it wine? Either way, you may hang up your hob-nailed boots now, and belay your Baedeker.



# The Rhenish Red: Discovering German Pinot Noir

By Andrew Whiteley

At least once a week someone asks me for an *interesting* Pinot Noir, and then scoffs when I suggest a delicate and lively German red. I brace myself for their response: “Germany only makes sweet white wine!” Or, “All they grow is Riesling.” Sometimes, more kindly, “Pinot Noir, in Germany?”

Believing Germany only makes white wine is a common misconception, and rightly so. But in reality, it’s akin to saying, “Da Vinci was just a painter.”

Or, to keep it Germanic, “Einstein was only good at math.” While Germany does in fact produce mostly white wine—much of it wonderfully sweet—it also has a long history with Pinot Noir and other reds. For centuries, Germany was capable of producing high-quality Pinot Noir, and did so to great acclaim. This did not mean however, that Mother Nature would always cooperate.



*Grapes ripen in the Ahr Valley.*

## A Golden History

Known in Germany as Spätburgunder (literally, “late Burgundian”), Pinot Noir migrated from France’s Cote d’Or in the 13th century with the arrival of the winemaking Cistercian monks. Despite being cultivated just a few hours from Burgundy, it is not surprising that German Pinot failed to rival its French counterpart. Notoriously fickle, Pinot Noir would often fail to ripen in Germany’s northern climate. After all, Germany’s southernmost wine region, Baden, is at a latitude above Fargo, North Dakota. Despite not having the world fame of France’s Burgundies, German winemakers do enjoy a similar, if colder, climate and the poor soils perfect for growing great grapes. In years when it’s warm enough to ripen the grapes, those conditions impart immense character and intensity to the fruit. In good years, German winemakers produce a world-class Pinot Noir, wines that are at the same time delicate, lively, and full of zest.

## Why You’ve Never Heard of It

Despite its noble history, Spätburgunder’s reputation took a serious hit in the 20th century. Many of the high-quality vineyards were repeatedly ravaged by war in the 1870s, 1910s, and 1940s. Tragically, they were replaced with vines bred for disease resistance and high-volume production. These new vines produced oceans of low-quality grapes that were vinified into nothing more than sugar water and exported all over the world. This is where Germany’s reputation for producing sweet white wines comes from. The few red wines exported were invariably thin, sweet, pink-tinged concoctions. Nearly all of the very best wines were kept inside Germany and remained a secret to much of the wine-drinking world, and especially to wine lovers in the U.S.

## Why You Should Drink It Now

Fortunately, German winemaking has undergone a tremendous renaissance. A number of factors have contributed to this quality revolution that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson sum up the key points beautifully in their World Atlas of Wine: “Germany’s determined new generation of growers, inspired by the potential of historically glorious vineyard sites, and often influenced by peers in very distant countries, has also been helped by the effects of climate change.”

In one of the few wine-producing countries aided by a warming planet, German Pinot grapes are now regularly reaching full ripeness. Warm days, cool nights, and tremendous success has induced growers to plant Pinot Noir and to focus on controlling yields and increasing quality. In a generation, Spätburgunder plantings have tripled, and become Germany’s third most cultivated variety and its most important red grape. Only France and the United States have more vineyard area planted to Pinot Noir.

While the majority of these high-quality German Pinot Noirs never make it to the export market, there are top producers and hidden gems available at K&L. All that remains is to try a glass and spread the word.

### 2012 Königschaffhausen Steingruble Spätburgunder Trocken Baden (\$24.99)

It’s impossible to miss the stunning color of this wine. The beautiful, dark tawny core gently transforms into a translucent rim, hinting at the delicacy within. Tart cranberry, blackberry, and a gentle earthiness jump out of the glass. Supple leather and spice coat the tongue in a veil of fine, savory tannins. Surprisingly long on the finish, the wine develops a more integrated and complete savory character when decanted for several hours.

**2012 Dr. Heger Pinot Noir Baden (\$20.99)** Loaded with primary raspberry and black cherry aromas, the flavor profile expands to include a touch of sweet watermelon as well. Zippy acidity and tiny, round, gentle tannins combine for a firm definition and structure that leaves you wanting to start on your next sip even as the stony mineral finish carries on.

### 2011 Friedrich Becker Estate Pinot Noir

**Pfalz (\$18.99)** From the second you open the bottle, this wine shows that it’s alive, defined by energy and tension. Each note of tart cherry, fresh cut grass, and anise are absolutely buzzing with excitement. With time, the dramatic buzz settles into a deeply integrated pleasure. After being open for several hours, individual notes no longer jump out as much as an overwhelming sense of rich flavor and splendid texture. The wine leaves a general satisfaction, like finishing a full, hearty meal, including dessert.



# Suprising Summer Whites from Around Europe

By Olivia Ragni

**When customers ask for those refreshing summer whites, I can always direct them to the trusted Sancerre, or crisp and zippy Vinho Verde.**

But there is a whole world of wines out there that can quench your summer thirst just as well—if not better—waiting to be discovered.

One such place is Georgia—not the state, the country. The Republic of Georgia’s history of winemaking dates back over 8,000 years, making it one of, if not the oldest, winemaking regions in the world. Today, many producers still make their wines the way they did thousands of years ago. Nikoloz Antadze, founder of Antadze Winery, makes his wines in the traditional method of fermenting and aging in clay vessels called “qvevri.” The **2010 Antadze Mtsvane Republic of Georgia (\$23.99)** has an amber hue from skin contact, and aromas of apple cider, walnuts and dried apricots with salinity and kumquat on the palate. Yes, this is an “orange wine,” and it’s perfect for warm weather and deserves food. Try it with Mediterranean cuisine.

The island wines of Santorini, Greece make for some of the most superb summer wines. With their refreshing acidity and beautiful, full texture, they pair perfectly with seafood on a summer night. While it may be hot here, the altitude and the extremely strong winds of these volcanic islands help to create a cooling effect for the vines. Due to the intense winds, a unique vine training has developed: for protection, vines are trained in a cylinder shape a few inches below the ground. Phylloxera never reached this island, providing an opportunity to taste ungrafted, original, pre-phylloxera wines. The majority of the whites are from the indigenous grape Assyrtiko. The **2014 Argyros Estate “Atlantis” White Cyclades (\$16.99)** is 90% Assyrtiko. Argyros is a fourth generation family-owned winery, with some of the oldest vineyards on the island. This blend bursts with orange blossom, crushed stone, tangerine and white flowers. With zippy acidity and a fuller texture, this can be drunk on its own or with or with light fare.

You can even find gorgeous, dry summer whites in Hungary—it’s not just the land of sweet dessert Tokaj. Many producers are making exceptional dry and sparkling wines from Furmint. At Királyudvar, Domaine Huet and Tokaj winemaker Ivan Szepsy work together to make fantastic biodynamic wines. The **2012 Királyudvar Furmint Sec (Dry) (\$20.99)** is dry, waxy, full-bodied and full of flavors of flowers, minerals and nuts. A picnic wine, for certain.

While Sancerre is absolutely delicious, how about venturing a little southwest of Sancerre to hit the appellation of Quincy—its AOC status actually pre-dates that of Sancerre. Quincy is planted to mainly Sauvignon Blanc and has gravel-based soils, in contrast to Sancerre’s chalky limestone. Domaine Les Poëte is a small winery with only six hectares spread throughout the Loire. The winemaker is a chef-turned-sommelier-turned-winemaker. The **2013 Domaine Les Poëte Quincy (\$28.99)** is stellar, and it has all the staff here smitten. Aromas of smoke, baked apple pie and honeysuckle, and a palate of pear, nectarine, flint and mineral-driven finish that just won’t quit. This should be your new go-to summer wine paired with fish, veggies or goat cheese.

Finally, let’s turn to dry Riesling, the wine that really should be everyone’s summer favorite. Let go of all your preconceived notions about Riesling being sweet, and try some of the world’s most elegant dry Rieslings. Riesling is naturally high in acid, crisp, mineral-driven and clean—everything you want on a warm day. German Riesling has developed a reputation for being sweet, but in fact the majority of the German population consumes dry Riesling, while most sweet Rieslings are simply for export. Johannes Leitz produces beautiful dry Rieslings from his vines in the Rheingau, including his entry-level **2013 Leitz “Eins Zwei Dry” Riesling Trocken Rheingau (\$15.99)**. It’s round and balanced, without searing high acid, completely dry and perfect to wash down sausages or smoked fish.

While Austria may be more well known for its Grüner Veltliner, some exceptional Rieslings come out of Austria. Weingut Buchegger in Kremstal makes dry, stainless steel aged Rieslings with a natural approach to farming their 10 hectares with no pesticides or herbicides. The **Buchegger Gebling Riesling Kremstal (\$21.99)** shows aromas of chalk, wet stone and white flowers, while the palate has flavors of nectarine and peach and a wonderful, piquant and mouthwatering acidity. The high acid of Riesling makes it easy to pair dry Rieslings with just about anything, from a light summer salad, roast chicken or pork to veal schnitzel.



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