

> THE WINE FIND

Stock up on this summer's stylish pours



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ADVICE

We're finally over the freezing weather. So the question becomes, what will be hot this summer wine-wise?

Right off the bat, rosé is sure to be stylish. But not just any rosé. Only the palest versions. Too much colour gives the impression of sweet, alcopop, which can be a bit inelegant. And sugary, fruity styles tend to tire the palate quickly and can be tough to pair with food.

Meanwhile, a lightly tinted rose-gold, pale pink, or coral-kissed wine suggests something drier, quenching and more understated with wispy flavours and aromas that won't upstage even the most delicate fish dish. The better bottles work just as well without food too due to their balance, lift and easy drinkability.

As the LCBO's seasonal selection appears on shelves, I'll be recommending some exciting rosés. But the always-available **2017 Ogier Côtes du Ventoux Rosé** from the Rhône region of France (LCBO 134916 \$14.75) is always a great go-to. This pale Grenache-Syrah blend is shatteringly fresh, bone-dry and restrained with quiet suggestions of ruby grapefruit, ripe apricot and strawberry on the nose and palate and a finish of Macadamia nut nougat that lingers. **Score: 91**

Also hot this summer will be smart bubbly. Thrilled to see sparkling wine finally seen as just that — as actually wine rather than just a celebratory tippie. As such, the most stylish drops are those that engage the mind as well as the taste

buds with layered aromatic complexity.

While Champagne achieves this relatively easily and will never go out of fashion, its price tag puts it out of reach for everyday drinking. But crémant can offer similar charms at a fraction of the price, making it a stylish pour.

Crémant is French for sparkling wine from regions other than Champagne. And like Champagne, it's made bubbly by undergoing a second fermentation in bottle. This labour-intensive process creates more complexity than other methods of adding effervescence to wine. And the best examples are riveting.

Such is the case with the **NV Grande Cuvée 1531 de Aimery**, a crémant from Limoux in the south of France (LCBO 428086 \$18.95). This dry, sophisticated blend of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc and Pinot Noir suggests white peach, white flowers and almonds on the nose and palate. The tiniest of bubbles thread the wine and taste almost creamy in the mouth, while subtle minerality underpins the fruit and emerges on the finish. Great value. **Score: 94**

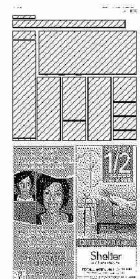
Riesling has always been the darling of connoisseurs for its balance. Though Riesling ranges from dry to sweet, the wine's hallmark electric acidity always balances the sugar so it finishes clean and dry. Regardless of where it sits on that spectrum, Riesling is a stylish summertime drop. Serve off-dry to medium-sweet bottles well-chilled under the setting sun with a plate of charcuterie, after a meal in lieu of a big, fluffy dessert, or on the deck — or balcony — with a handful of

roasted, salted nuts.

Ontario makes some excellent Riesling, including the **2016 Tawse Sketches of Niagara Riesling** from Ontario (Vintages Essential 89029 \$19.95), which I've recommended before. It's as delicious as a lick of lively sorbet on a hot sunny afternoon. Expect cool aromas of caramelized peach tart followed by a sweet-tart attack of poached stone fruit and lime sorbet flavour that scrapes the palate clean. Deliciousness. **Score: 93**

Impress your judgiest red wine friends with a bottle from an undersung region that totally overdelivers. One such bottle being released Saturday in Ontario is the **2015 Gérard Bertrand Syrah/Grenache** from Languedoc, France (Vintages 413237 \$16.95), a marvelous red that exudes seductive scents of black cherries and grilled meat. It saturates the palate with juicy flavours of macerated berries laced with roasted meat, toasted tobacco, dried herbs de Provence and a touch of warm wood, making it brilliant with everything from barbecue and hotdogs cooked over a campfire to fancier dinner party fare. I actually had a couple of glasses of it at Le Select Bistro last month and it shone with the famous duck confit that's been on the menu for decades. Terrific value for money. **Score: 93**

Lastly, Californian Cabernet Sauvignon that drinks like it's worth more will remain hot this summer. A fabulous example is the **2016 Buena Vista Cabernet Sauvignon** from the North Coast of California (Vintages 254458 \$24.95), which hits shelves Saturday. The nose is glorious with sultry



aromas of super-ripe raspberries and black currant liqueur. Then, the wine unfolds with rich, cashmere fruit that tastes of black cherries soaked in cassis, crème brûlée, and a hint of glossy, dark chocolate.

This long, hedonistic red is sure to go with any grilled steak you care to pair with it. Score: **92**

Stock up now so you're set when the sun really starts to shine.

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From left:
2017 Ogier Côtes du Ventoux Rosé (LCBO 134916 \$14.75);
2015 Gérard Bertrand Syrah/Grenache (Vintages 413237 \$16.95);
NV Grande Cuvée 1531 de Aimery (LCBO 428086 \$18.95);
2016 Tawse Sketches of Niagara Riesling (Vintages Essential 89029 \$19.95);
2016 Buena Vista Cabernet Sauvignon (Vintages 254458 \$24.95).