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John Legend Plunges Into the Celebrity Rosé Business

Would you expect anything less from Chrissy Teigen's husband?

By Sheila Marikar

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On a recent Wednesday afternoon, the singer and songwriter John Legend was at the Soho House in Malibu, Calif., his jean-jacketed back to the Pacific Ocean, his left hand around a glass of rosé that he helped create. He was ruminating about the global uptick in wine consumption — the millennial's alcoholic beverage of choice, according to [studies](#) and [articles](#) galore.

“Wine has a kind of connection to luxury, and if you can make it in a price range that’s available to a lot of people, they want to access it,” said Mr. Legend, who is 39 (more of a Gen X-er).

He paused to consider the salmon-colored varietal swishing around his glass, which was created with Jean-Charles Boisset, costs \$25 per bottle and was made with grapes grown in the South of France, on a vineyard a few miles from the Mediterranean.

"It was a big coup for us to get the grapes that we got from that area," Mr. Legend said.

The rosé is the fourth wine he and Mr. Boisset have produced together under the [LVE label](#), which stands for Legend Vineyard Exclusive. (The name "was always kind of suggestive of love, even though it doesn't spell it out explicitly," said Mr. Legend, born John Stephens.) It is also far from the only famous person's rosé on the market. Drew Barrymore [has one](#). [Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie](#) (their split notwithstanding) too.

"Typically we say no to any celebrity client," said Mr. Boisset, who wears his blond hair in suave waves and also dabbles in making jewelry.

"Typically, they're not as intensely into wine, not as dedicated to wine and winemaking."

He first received Mr. Legend in a private Napa Valley tasting room that had, fortuitously enough, a piano. "He played the piano, and we went back and forth between there and the blending room. He was really into it, so I said, 'Why not? Let's do it.'"

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who majored in English and worked in management consulting before pursuing music full-time, Mr. Legend has more Renaissance man bona fides than many of his Hollywood peers.

In 2015 he started the nonprofit [Free America](#), to raise awareness about mass incarceration in America. "I started reading about it and honestly, I just got mad," he said. Visiting prisons across the country for that project led to working with [Meet Your D.A.](#), a campaign funded, in part, by the American Civil Liberties Union that tracks how district attorneys across the country vote on criminal justice reform.

"A lot of times, D.A.s run unopposed, people vote for whatever is on their side, party-wise, and they don't care or pay attention," Mr. Legend said. A waiter offered him more rosé and he politely declined. "So we decided, 'Let's pay attention!' Some of them are doing a great job, some of them could be a lot better if they were held accountable, and if they don't want to change, we'll make sure we find someone else who can run against them."

Sometimes Mr. Legend's many worlds collide. Hours before the Malibu wine tasting, President Trump [had commuted the sentence of Alice Marie Johnson](#), a first-time nonviolent drug offender, in part because of an in-person plea from Kim Kardashian West.

Mr. Legend frequently disparages Mr. Trump and his administration on Twitter ([note his Father's Day tweet to Paul Ryan](#)). He also counts Ms. Kardashian West and her husband, [Kanye West](#), among his friends (Mr.

West hired Mr. Legend to sing on his tracks early in their careers). Did the confluence of friend, enemy and action make Mr. Legend re-evaluate his approach to this administration?

“My thought is, he’s our president right now,” Mr. Legend said. “He has power, and he can use those levers of power for good or he can use them for evil. To the extent that meeting with him and taking a photo or whatever you do with him can be used as leverage to improve people’s lives, that’s a good thing.”

“Kim did a good thing by getting a pardon for that woman,” he said. “If we really want systemic change, though, we’ve got to convince the people in power like Sessions, like Trump, to change policy rather than granting these things on an ad hoc, celebrity-focused basis. Right now it feels like a cross between a casting of ‘The Apprentice’ and a signal to the people who might testify against him, his pardoning strategy.”

A white-haired man in a baseball cap walked up to Mr. Legend. “I’m sorry, I overheard you, and that speech was epic,” he said, thrusting out his hand. “Your wife is magnificent, too. What beautiful children you make.”

Chrissy Teigen — model, cookbook author, [irreverent social media personality](#) and Mr. Legend’s wife — gave birth to their second child, a son named Miles, in May; their daughter, Luna, is 2. On President Trump’s 72nd birthday, Ms. Teigen and Mr. Legend [donated \\$288,000](#) — \$72,000 for each member of their immediate family — to the American Civil Liberties Union to aid immigrant families being separated at the border.

“Someone was asking me about having a new boy,” Mr. Legend said. “In this moment, I think more about, how do I raise a good man? How do I raise someone who will be kind and empathetic and not toxic?”

Earlier this month, he had a piano installed at a [wine tasting room](#) in Beverly Hills, where he plans to drop in for impromptu performances. On June 21 he played at a [wine-fueled outdoor concert](#) at the home of the decorator Kelly Wearstler (it was sponsored by Airbnb, but, alas, her place is not available for rent). It was a grander version of the barbecues he and Ms. Teigen often host, where she sometimes freestyles with whatever ingredients are on hand, he follows a recipe to the letter, and a lot of LVE gets poured.

On a velvet-roped couch near the bar, Ms. Teigen bounced Luna on her lap; Kris Kardashian grabbed a seat in front of Mr. Legend's ivory grand piano. Setting down his glass of rosé, Mr. Legend performed a handful of songs including "La Vie en Rose" (of course); a new song, "Preach" ("Every day I wake up, everything is broken, turning off my phone just to get out of bed"); and his popular ballad "[All of Me](#)."

Then he hopped the velvet rope, lifted Luna onto his shoulders and danced with his family until the rosé ran dry.