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Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr and Patrick Darr

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Wine etc.: Seeing red, or rosé for Valentine's Day

This is a bad time of the year if you hate red. It's everywhere – grocery shelves, wine stores, florists, gas stations and advertisements.

And however commercial the Valentine Day holiday, it's impossible to ignore unless you are single and unloved. Woe the spouse who fails to bring home roses, chocolates for an invitation to dinner. Yeah, we know merchants make a bundle on Valentine's Day, but trust two men who have been happily married to their wives for a long time: just go with the flow.

A homemade dinner and a bottle of wine can spare you a lot of expense. Throw some candles on the table, play some mood music and you have a cozy, romantic party for two.

If you want to open the wallet, you can splurge on a bottle of champagne and still save money. Since most women love bubbles on a special occasion, champagne is almost a guaranteed hit. And, it goes with most food – if it lasts that long.

If you aren't comfortable in the kitchen, you can order out. Sushi is a very romantic meal and it goes very well with champagne. So do oysters, lobster, scallops and most other seafood that is easy to prepare.

Our favorite wine to pour for the holiday is rosé. Unfortunately, merchants don't restock their shelves after last year's summer rush. But we've seen some of it still on the shelves. If you really want to take it up a notch, buy a pair of **Riedel's Vinum Extreme Rosé Provence** glasses (\$60/pair) and reuse them every Valentine's Day. Beautiful and, as always, functional.

So, light up the candles, order out, and pop a cork. Here are some recommendations for sparkling and still roses with fun and color:

- Champagne Drappier Brut Rosé** (\$60). The real deal from Champagne, this luxurious rosé has a simple floral nose with cherry flavors and an exotic dash of clove. It will leave the right impression.

- Moet & Chandon Rosé Imperial** (\$55). This silky non-vintage blend of pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay balances the acidity with the fruit for an ever-lasting and juicy experience. Red berry and peach notes.

- Bollinger Brut Rosé** (\$85). This luxurious non-vintage champagne shows off a copper sheen and copious raspberry aromas and red berry flavors. Very round and mature.

- Tselepos Amalia Brut** (\$28). We usually don't think of Greece when we think of sparkling wine, but Eros was the Greek god of love. Made from the indigenous moschofilero grapes, the wine has rose petal aromas and simple but pleasant flavors. Although not a rosé, it would make for a great aperitif or a breakfast treat.

- Mumm Napa Brut Rosé** (\$25). From Napa Valley, this delicious sparkling wine is a blend of pinot noir and chardonnay. Lots of strawberry, cherry flavors with an elegant finish.

•**Frank Family Vineyards Brut Rosé 2011** (\$45). We loved this beautiful sparkling wine the first time we sampled it at this historic winery. That it once housed the Hans Kornell Wine Cellars indicates Rich Frank's dedication to keeping the sparkling wine tradition. Made from small batches of Carneros grapes, the wine is sophisticated and delicious.

•**Saved Magic Maker Rosé** (\$16). Inspired by the winemaker's devotion to his wife, the etched bottle is worthy of the price along. Winemaker Scott Campbell is a well-known tattoo artist on the West Coast. The wine has copious red berry fruit and good acidity. Available at www.savedwines.com.

•**Marques de Caceres Rioja Rosé 2013** (\$14). This Spanish gem continues to impress with a hint of sweetness and crisp acidity.

Duckhorn's Paraduxx

Duckhorn makes a series of great wines in California and Washington state. The one that we have recently enjoyed is made under the **Paraduxx** label.

These premium Napa Valley blends often include zinfandel to break the establishment's mold of only Bordeaux varietals. Purists need to look the other way.

The **Paraduxx Proprietary Red Wine** (\$48) is a blend of zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot. Lots of dimension and boisterous fruit flavor.

Making its debut, the **2012 Paraduxx X2** blend (\$95) uses cabernet sauvignon from the best blocks in Howell Mountain. This is a blockbuster wine — blended with a bit of zinfandel — with plum and blueberry notes.

We love the wines that are coming from Atlas Peak, so the **2012 Paraduxx Atlas Peak** blend (\$80) of cabernet sauvignon and zinfandel show the power

that can come from grapes grown in this area. Expressive spice aromas with juicy red berry flavors.

Wine picks

•**Robert Mondavi Fume Blanc 2014** (\$20). One of our perennial favorites, this sauvignon blanc has good varietal flavors of pineapple and citrus.

•**Patz & Hall Chenoweth Ranch Pinot Noir 2013** (\$60). One of several top-drawer pinot noirs from this producer, the Chenoweth Ranch shows off a sturdy body with fine tannin and fresh raspberry flavors. Hints of lavender, mushrooms and spice.

•**Tenuta Sant'Antonio Monti Garbi Valpolicella Ripasso 2013** (\$20). This is a delicious, bodacious blend of corvina, rondinella, croatina and oseleta grapes from the Valpolicella region of Italy. Fermented in the ripasso style on the pomace of Amarone skins, it oozes ripe, dark berry fruit.