

Roséwave

Brewers ride the rising pink tide

Pink beer is nothing new, but this past summer, rosé beer officially became a thing—and hibiscus petals a new star ingredient—as brewers across the country put out light ales and lagers colored by additions of the flame-red flower petals and such fruits as cherries, cranberries, berries and grapes.

by
Alastair Bland

Beers have been various shades of pink before. I recall Farmer's Daughter, from Marin Brewing Co., as a rich and fruity cherry beer aged in red wine barrels, slightly sour and pinkish, first made at least several years ago. And Lambic beers made with raspberries have a pink glow about them, as do beers made with pomegranate, cranberry and blood orange. I've also seen hibiscus in beers for years (though I can't say I've tasted it).

But now that pink beers have been given a title borrowed from the wine industry, beer writers have recognized them as a veritable trend. Rosé wines, of Provençal nostalgia for many who have visited France, have been hot among American wine drinkers for several years, and it seems pink beers are riding the same wave. Like rosé wines, rosé beers have been touted as an ideal beverage for warm weather, and in the potentially balmy days of our frequent Indian summers, we have options to choose from.

In San Leandro, 21st Amendment has made a pink beer called Sparkale (available in a variety 12-pack in many supermarket beer aisles). The beer is made rosy with cherry and cranberry. Peach and apple went into the brew, too, and drive the flavor profile.

Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. used hibiscus, plus zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay grape must to pinkify a beer last spring. They called it Saison de Rosé, and the mildly funky French saison yeast combines well with the sourness from the fruit.

A similar beer, Saison Rosé, was recently introduced by Brewery Ommegang, with the added step of having been aged in oak barrels.

Firestone Walker's Rosalie "beer rosé" is made pink with grapes. So is Avery Brewing's Rocky Mountain Rosé.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SIERRA NEVADA BREWING CO.

In May, rock star Axl Rose sued Oskar Blues Brewing Co. for naming a pink beer Guns 'n' Rosé. As a result of a settlement, the Colorado brewery renamed the beer, which was made pink with hibiscus and prickly pear, Rosé for Daze.

In San Diego, Modern Times has been making a gose called Fruitlands for years. In 2018, the brewery made a pink Fruitlands: Rosé Edition of the beer by adding cherries, raspberries and cranberries, plus lemons for some acidic kick.

Modern science and taxonomy taught us that bats and birds are not related simply because they both use wings to fly. Likewise, just because two beers are pink does not mean they have anything of substance in common. We have seen pink barrel-aged sours, pink Lacto-soured Berliner weisses, pink saisons, pink goes, pink IPAs and pink lagers. Indeed, this diverse category of beers is unlikely to be branded in any official way as a style, per se, and only in the shallowest sense are they anything to marvel at—they are pink.

And like the waning days of summer, and the momentary glow of a bright hibiscus petal, rosé beers may fade and go away. □



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