

# PINK IN PROGRESS

A CLASSIC AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY—  
ONLY BY A BRIT AND IN FRANCE...

BY ANDREW BELL

I spent my day recently with a winemaker. Not unusual you say? Well, I do not represent this winemaker, and he only makes rosé! The winery is Mirabeau, and the couple of dozen enthusiasts who attended proprietor-winemaker Stephen Cronk's seminar in New York were not disappointed!

Mr. Cronk had spent time in the wine trade in England in the mid '80s into the early '90s, unsustainably, and went into another industry to reset the accounts. In the 15-year wine hiatus, he built up a business, married, and but never quite let that wine flame die out.

In 2008 a leap was made. London home sold, affairs packed, children prepped; in 2008 the Cronks set up shop in a small town in Cotignac, Provence. No experience making wine, not bilingual, young children, not a ton of dollars and seemingly less cents, the Cronks begin what ten years later is a classic American success story, only by a Brit and in France.

Listening to Mr. Cronk speak of his wine like children makes them come to life. His youthful exuberance is only seconded by what you actually find in the glasses. We tasted three wines from his tiered lineup referred to as Classic, Pure and Etoile across two vintages.

## Bubbles to Begin

We started, however, with a first for me: a bubbly humorously referred to as "pink Prosecco from Provence." I felt obliged to chime in with the usual: Prosecco, from the grape known as Glera, can not make

a rosé. He smiled that smile you see when a former emperor looks upon the liberated colonist. He continued to explain that "méthode traditionnelle" aka méthode Champenoise did not work with his grapes, so the Charmat method was the only solution. (As you know, Charmat method is tank fermented and bottled under pressure to maintain the effervescence.)

And so we tasted La Folie, a blend of Cinsault (40%), Syrah (35%), Grenache (20%) and Colombard (5%). The color was rose pale, the bubbles surprisingly tiny, the aromas bursting, and a ripe fruit finish set up your palate for the next series of rosés.

I am not a wine critic; my perspective is always to see and speak to what is good, interesting and unique in a wine tasting experience. The bubbles were like listening to jazz—the notes bounced between your nose and palate and allowed for a variety of impressions that were individual to each person tasting. A real treat.

## Moving On Up

Globally, these layered wines hit me as quite surprising and unique in their individuality. The "Classic" presented itself as a straight-forward no nonsense blend of press-macerated Syrah (50%), Grenache (40%) and Cinsault (10%). More deeply colored from the Syrah, yet a combination of vivacity and accessibility with a Syrah's profundity!

The "Pure" expression is just that: pure fruit (60% Grenache, 40% Syrah). There is a lilting spice wrapped in fruit



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minerality that drives the experience to the back of the palate and lingers.

When you reach the top of the Mirabeau experience you are in the stars: "Etoile" is their gastronomic expression of 90% Grenache and 10% Cinsault. Lighter in color, more present in tannin, brighter in acidity, Etoile is a red wine drinker's rosé. The tannins are evident but unassuming; the fruit ripe and juicy but rooted in minerality; the minerality is driven with great elegance.

The Cronks are a family worth meeting, risking all for our benefit. The wines of Mirabeau are inspiring. Go and be inspired. ■

Andrew Bell is founder of American Sommelier. Through the Sales, Service and Buying Seminar Series, American Sommelier provides professionals with the tools needed to build and maintain a successful wine program in any restaurant environment. Member benefits include events, career guidance, discounts and the American Sommelier newsletter. For more details and a calendar of classes, visit [americansommelier.com](http://americansommelier.com) or call 212-226-8283.

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