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## Wine Enthusiast Podcast: Stop and Smell the Rosés

BY WINE ENTHUSIAST



Illustration by Alyssa Nassner

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On the new episode of the Wine Enthusiast Podcast, we meet winemakers working to quench your summer thirst with some remarkable rosés, including Jon Bon Jovi.



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The Wine Enthusiast Podcast

Read the full transcript of "Stop and Smell the Rosés":

**Lauren Buzzeo:** From Wine Enthusiast Magazine, this is the Wine Enthusiast Podcast. I'm Managing Editor and Tasting Director, Lauren Buzzeo. Coming up, stop and smell the rosés, we'll hear from winemakers working to quench your summer thirst, including one you music fans might very well recognize.

**Jon Bon Jovi:** We've really put a lot of passion into creating this blend so we could, you know, be proud of it. This isn't a celebrity vanity project.

**LB:** We'll meet a former London telecom executive who's living his dream of making wines in France.

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**Stephen Cronk:** We chose Provence because we love the wine and we love the region, and that was the...honestly, the luckiest thing we ever did, because we had no idea that Provence rosé was going to take off to the extent it has.

**LB:** And we'll talk with an innovator who's changing the way we consume wine on the go.

**Grant Hemingway:** The resurgence of cans has been partially driven by the craft beer industry. There's a lot of ecological benefits.

**LB:** It's coming up on the Wine Enthusiast Podcast.

With summer around the corner, what better time to enjoy your favorite drink on the beach, at a music festival, or in the solitude of your own back yard? On today's show we'll meet three individuals who are working to create even more great wine options for the warmer months.

The first one you undoubtedly know, though not necessarily from the world of wine. You probably know him from the world of music, where he's sold more than 130 million albums worldwide, including two solo records and 12 studio albums with his band. But now, Jon Bon Jovi has launched his own brand of rosé. I recently spoke with Jon Bon Jovi and his son, Jesse, about [Diving Into Hampton Water](#), their new collaboration with famed French winemaker [Gerard Bertrand](#).

Jon began by explaining how he first got into wine.



*Talking with Jon Bon Jovi on  
Crafting Rosé*

**Jon Bon Jovi:** Oh, my goodness, probably discovering Italian reds in my youth, you know, pretending to be cultured, but anything more than a twist-off cap in my youth was considered cultured. But, with time, age, and experience, you know, I've been fortunate enough to travel most of the world, and so whether it was the South of France, or Italy, or Australia, Africa, there's just great wines all over the world, as you well know, New Zealand. So, I've had the opportunity to taste quite a few.

**LB:** And as Jon's son, Jesse, explains, dad's passion for wine definitely rubbed off on him.

**Jesse Bongiovi:** Most of the wine that I have enjoyed has been rosé, you know, and that was really kind of my first stepping stones into the wine world. And so, yeah, I mean, it's always just been something that we've had around, and like my dad said, you know, there's always been wine around the house, but yeah, I mean, rosé was really my kind of introduction into it, and then now, you know, spending time with Gerard, getting a lot more of an education on the little details that go into it and things like that has been, you know, absolutely amazing. But, yeah, my initial introduction was just sitting around on the porch and enjoying this stuff, you know?

**LB:** Jon Bon Jovi says the idea for making wine was actually Jesse's.

**JB:** When Jesse came to me with the idea a good 18 months ago, and then when we seriously started taking it into consideration last June, we had been quite familiar with Gerard's wines because they're sold in East Hampton, where our home is, and so I was very familiar. And then, through a mutual friend, an associate, that's how we were ultimately introduced to him and, you know, built upon that to be here today.

**LB:** Now, you might wonder how such a collaboration would actually work. Jon explains.

**JB:** We loved what Gerard's catalog of wines were, and I think that he reacted to our concept. And so, you know, you bring in something, and, of course, he's bringing a lot, and then he was also willing to educate us. So, this blend was done by the three of us in his blending room, like, literally with the eye dropper and the test tube. So this isn't a white label that he had in some back room, we really have put a lot of passion into creating this blend so we could, you know, be proud of it. This isn't a celebrity vanity project.

**LB:** Indeed, the name Jon Bon Jovi does not appear anywhere on the wine's label. [Diving Into Hampton Water](#) is a rosé made from Grenache, Cinsault, Mourverde, and Syrah grapes. So, how did they settle on this blend?

**JB:** One, it was incredibly educational. You know, when... Normally, when we try wines we just go "And there it is..." you know? But literally to see... You know, we walked into the room and there was 20 bottles laid out with all different, you know, grapes and from different places and things like that, and to have Gerard say, "Okay, take a sip of this one and now your mouth is going to salivate," and you go, "Yeah, it did," you know what I mean? And, "Take a sip of this one and there's a little bit of the spice."

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And literally, like my dad said, to... We laid out a bunch of glasses and it was all different kind of varieties and blends, and we said, "Okay, we like this one, and this one, and this one," and then it was, "Okay, we like this one and this one," and then, "Okay, we like..." And it was just... To watch him, you know? To watch the master at work, and he would go, "Okay, now try it," and then a little bit, couple more drops of this, "Okay, now try it," couple more drops of this, "Now try it," you know?

And to really go through that and to see not only the passion that goes into it, but almost the science that goes into it, you know? And the exact kind of, you know, surgical kind of measurements that go into it, I think was really educational, you know, to us especially, but it was amazing just to see him...you know, to see him at work was really something that was incredibly enlightening, I thought.

**JB:** It's not dissimilar from making a record because, you know, there's the instrumentation... When I'm in a studio mixing, the difference between turning something up one dB or not can change the entire feel of the record. So, as we got closer and closer to the blend, and then Gerard said, "No, wait just a second," literally took an eye dropper and it was a couple more drops of this, a couple more drops of that, that was the nuance that, you know, when I'm in the studio putting a little more high end on the cymbals, you know? And that's when we all walk away, and at the same time in the studio, you say, "There's the record. There was the one."

**LB:** Interested in taking your own dive into [Hampton water](#)? You can find a dealer in your area by visiting our website, [winemag.com/podcast](#).

Anyone who has ever dreamt of quitting a job and starting over can take a cue from the guy we'll hear from next. As Stephan Cronk will tell you, living in London he worked a soulless corporate job, but he had dreams of doing something else: owning a winery. So, he put in his notice and relocated to France, where he started [Mirabeau](#). Mirabeau recently partnered with [Whole Foods](#) to sell canned rosé in a four pack.

Wine Enthusiast Senior Tasting Coordinator Fiona Adams sat down with Stephen, who described how his wine dreams got started.

**Stephen Cronk:** So, my... I had been in the wine trade during my 20s. I was driving delivery vans, or trucks, as you call them, around London as my intro into the wine trade, and I started... I did the wine exams, and then my boss said, "Go buy yourself a suit, Stephen, and will you start selling?" So, in my 20s, my early 20s, I was selling wine in London, and then when I was in my mid 20s, with the arrogance and hubris of youth I thought I can do a better job than my boss, so I set up my own company, Stephen Cronk Fine Wines, and by the time I was 30 I was so hideously in debt that I had to sell it and pay off the debt.

So that was a complete disaster, and I went to telecoms for 15 years. And the thing that triggered it... So, I got married, and that was great, in 1998, and shortly after I got married I went on a walking holiday with some friends of mine in Southwest France, and they're really nosy, and they were saying, "So, Stephen," you know, "How much did you spend on your house in London?" And I told them, and he said, "Oh, wow, so this vineyard we've been walking around for the last two hours is on the market for the same price you spent on your house."

And that made me think, okay, that's crazy. I bought something which is this huge debt in London, and there's no fun, and I could have bought a vineyard for that. So I came back and said to my wife, "One day, I want to sell the house and go and make wine."

**Fiona Adams:** So you went with France because you were there, that was... Did you think of going to anywhere other than France?

So, when we first thought, okay, this is a real idea, we've got to make it work, we looked at France, Spain, Italy, I mean, in Europe, in the Old World if you like, but France attracted us. I mean, even though we didn't speak any French, which isn't really a help, but we didn't speak any Italian or Spanish either, so it was no worse to go to France.

My wife thought, actually, that, look, if we move to Provence, maybe our friends will come and see us. If we move to an obscure wine region with no airports then, you know, no one's going to come and see us. So, we chose Provence because we love the wine and we love the region, and that was the... honestly, the luckiest thing we ever did, because we had no idea that Provence rosé was going to take off to the extent it has.

**Fiona Adams:** Yeah. So you knew you always wanted to make rosé.

**SC:** Yeah, we left London to go make rosé.

**FA:** Most people, they buy rosé and they drink it right away, and it's April, and it's been in the bottle for weeks. How do you think rosé fairs if you hold on to it a little bit longer? And do you think that is an area of growth for rosé?

**SC:** Well, I certainly think that rosé is coming... I think there's a second wave of rosé now, which is much more qualitative than, perhaps, the first wave. I think there are

a lot of... I mean, if you made pink rose and it said Provence on the label for the last few years, you could sell it. Now I think consumers are becoming far more discerning, but also, they are also demanding rosé all year round, which is the first big breakthrough. It used to be very much a summer only drink, but you yourself told me you drink it at Thanksgiving.

It's an incredibly food versatile drink, and I think it's...that's one of the first barriers we had to break down is if you drink white in the winter, why can't you drink rosé in the winter? I mean, it's... So that's the first thing.

The second thing, as you say, is ageability. There's no reason why a well made rosé can't last for several years, yet the current fad is to drink it...is to drink the latest vintage, which is nonsense. My 16s are tasting absolutely great now. I've, unfortunately, sold out of most of them, but they...you know, they... If they're well made they last several years, and that's the next big thing I want to see, the next big trend within rosé is that people actually hang on to them for a bit longer.

**FA:** So do you think being a younger sort of brand within the scope of Provence rosé is really giving you a leg up in that sort of market where you started with being social media savvy and that's what's skyrocketed you in a very short period of time, do you think having that focus right away is really what's setting you apart from some of the older brands?

**SC:** I look at the most important people in our lives are our consumers. They're the people that we need to please, we need to make great wine for year in, year out, and they're the ones that ultimately are enabling us to live in this beautiful part of the world, and to live the dream of making wine.

So, I look at this as being... You know, the center of my universe isn't my land, it's my consumer, and I think that's the difference, it's thinking about how would I view Mirabeau if I was drinking it in London, or in New York, or Chicago, somewhere else, and how do I relate to that brand? And that's the different thinking that, perhaps, we bring to Provence as a region.

**FA:** So, looking back now, can you imagine what if have...your life would be like if you were still in your corporate London job?

**SC:** It's funny, I can't. I can't. It feels like even though I was doing that corporate job for 15 years, it feels like it never happened. It's really strange.

I mean, I carried around with me, in my jacket, in my suit jacket pocket, because I used to have to wear a suit, a little black book that, when I was bored in meetings I would write down my business ideas, and I would develop my latest thinking, and so I was always looking for an escape, and now that I have escaped, I can't imagine ever going back.

But I think so many people probably also harbor dreams of doing something else, and I think that's really... It's what keeps us alive, I think, to think that actually, you know, either is what I'm doing now what I'm cut out to do? Is it what I want to do? Is it all I can possibly ever do?

I think it's a very important process to go through, to, you know, have these ideas, to talk to people about them, to socialize them, to test them, and to put a black line through them, or across through them if they're not the right idea. It's really cathartic to go through that process, and to scratch out an idea if it's a bad idea, or, if it's not a bad idea, what's stopping you going to do it? And if there's nothing stopping you doing it, then you've just got to go and do it.

**Lauren Buzzeo:** To see [videos featuring Stephen and his family](#), visit our website, [winemag.com/podcast](http://winemag.com/podcast).

Time for a break, but when we come back...

**Grant Hemingway:** We're going to put everything we have into making sure that consumers know there's real grapes behind it, it's not just some mass-consumed beverage that we turn on the spigots and magically, poof, it's Chardonnay.

**LB:** A winemaker presents his case for cans. It's coming up on the Wine Enthusiast Podcast.

Welcome back to the Wine Enthusiast Podcast, I'm Lauren Buzzeo.

Grant Hemingway is the founder of the [Essentially Geared Wine Company](#). The company's mission? To show that, quote, "High quality wine doesn't have to come with a high level of fuss." Sustainability is a key word for Grant, that's why he packages all of his products in single serve cans.

Wine Enthusiast Contributing Editor Virginie Boone sat down with Grant. She began by coming clean about her skepticism when it comes to canned wine.

**Virginie Boone:** I mean, I have to say that when we first met, because it was pretty early on, probably around May or June of 2017, when you were first launching. I was a little bit skeptical about cans. I mean, I've been in the wine world for a long time. I've obviously tasted a lot of bottled wines. Cans... At first, I was a little reluctant just because I sort of felt like aren't we, as a culture, done with cans? I mean, it seemed

like people weren't really drinking canned beer anymore, or necessarily sodas.

**GH:** Yeah, I think the resurgence of cans has been partially driven by the craft beer industry. There's a lot of ecological benefits, sustainability, it's fully recyclable, it's very convenient, they're very portable. So there's a lot of benefits inherent in the design of the format, but you are right, there is a hesitancy by the consumer, by the trade, from a qualitative perspective, some bias, perceived bias that we continue to fight.

But the vessel itself is no different in terms of what you're putting quality beverage in, whether it's beer, or nonalcoholic, or bash cocktails now, I mean, cans are hot, and now this is just the next iteration for the wine industry.

**VB:** Well, I mean, I've completely come around. I mean, certainly meeting with you and other producers that I really respect in Napa and Sonoma who are starting to make some really great canned wines. I'm having a lot of fun with just the different types of wines. I think there's a lot more fun in blends.

But I also just really, really love the notion of single serve, and of having can...of having wine, because it can be delivered through cans, having it at more places where people are enjoying other types of beverages and have yet to really have an option that's wine.

**GH:** That's been a huge driving force for our sales is RTD, we call it, ready to drink. Having wine available in venues that, perhaps, have never served wine before. And so, when you have a new venue opening up wine, you're hopefully introducing wine to new consumers, and that's our whole end goal here in the wine industry is to bring more people into the wine, wine drinkers, and I think that the can format lends itself to avenues that haven't been in play.

And so, for us, it still boils down to quality, and so what you don't want to happen is someone to get a canned wine that is inferior beverage. There's a lot of bad bottles out there, too, that may be turning people off, right?

But we want to make sure that, for Essentially Geared and for all other can producers, that people are actually drinking real wine with a story, with sourcing, with authenticity. And when they finally get to it, maybe they elevate into other wine formats, different wine styles, different wine regions. I mean, because this is... We're talking about the ultimate beverage here.

**VB:** I agree. One of our earlier conversations you said something about you pick specifically for a canned wine, so you ... And you mentioned sort of farming for a canned wine as well. So how does it... How does that differ from when you're making a bottled product?

**GH:** That's a stylistic interpretation by myself, but we're looking more at crisper, cleaner styles, as opposed to maybe fuller, more phenolic or tannic wines. You know, the RTD, or single serve, format that maybe is going to be consumed at a camping site, or is going to be consumed at a festival or a ball game, for us I envision that consumer wanting something a little bit crisper, a little cleaner, a little bit more acid.

So, for our sparkling, we're picking an 18 and a half Brix, very low, second-guessed by the grower because we're going out there picking so early, but the styles themselves lend to, you know, very approachable, very easy drinking, and very bright, and I think with a... If you think about the format itself, it's airtight, it's lightproof, these wines are not going to develop, they're not going to age, do not lay our cans down.

I mean, these are hopefully immediately consumed within 24 hours of purchase, or you're at least planning for your camping trip coming up or you're planning for the pool party you're going to have. And so these wines are ready to go upon entering that can without development, and, you know, you have to keep that in mind when you're sourcing your grapes, when you're picking, but also how you're making it in the winery.

**VB:** What is the media getting wrong? What is kind of the... I don't know, some of the stories that you've read been getting wrong about cans?

**GH:** I think the media coverage to date has been focused primarily on the format, and while there are inherent benefits in cans, it's not exclusive to wine. You know, the actual product inside the can is what is exclusive to wine, and I don't expect a mass media publication to wane on about the qualitative, or the sourcing, but I think what they're missing is that there's real producers, there's quality producers getting behind this format and putting, and allocating, real resources from the vineyard, from the wine making, from the marketing side of things, and trying to make this, you know, not just a trend, but this is here to stay.

And so, for me it's about making sure that that gets relayed to the consumer in that article, or in that digital piece, because that's going to help people get over the hurdle of, well, I've never had canned wine before so what is this going to taste like?

It should taste like wine. You know, it should taste like your Chardonnay, and, you

know, until we get the media and the consumers to understand that there's no difference in what's inside, then we're going to continue to battle this bias. We're going to put everything we have into making sure that consumers know there's real grapes behind it, it's not just some mass consumed beverage that we turn on the spigots and magically, poof, it's Chardonnay, because you wouldn't put out something subpar in a bottle why would you put out something subpar in a can?

**VB:** Exactly. Exactly. Well, I think that you're putting out some great, great canned wines. I've enjoyed a lot of them. I look forward to new ones that you're going to be creating. I'm sure that you've got a lot of things in your brain that you've got ready to go.

**GH:** It's the wild wild west, we enjoy being a disrupter right now in the industry. We're excited for the next 12 months, certainly for the next three as summer comes around, because seasonality for cans right now is a real thing as people get outdoors more and are consuming.

**VB:** Well, I think it's been a long time coming to make wine more accessible, for sure, and more fun. So, thank you so much, Grant.

**GH:** Thank you.

**Lauren Buzzeo:** You can learn more about Grant's "can-paign" for cans versus bottles by visiting our website, [winemag.com/podcast](http://winemag.com/podcast).

That's it for today's Wine Enthusiast Podcast. We heard from Senior Tasting Coordinator Fiona Adams, Wine Enthusiast Contributing Editor Virginie Boone, and me, Lauren Buzzeo. You can subscribe to the Wine Enthusiast Podcast on Apple Podcast, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcasts, and please, write us a review, we'd love to hear what you think.

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The Wine Enthusiast Podcast is produced by Sheir and Shim LLC.

Once more, I'm Lauren Buzzeo. See you next time.

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