



## Pink and Sweet

June 12, 2009



Two kinds of pink wine.

In celebration of the withdrawal of the proposal that would have broadened the allowed production methods for the production of pink wine in Europe (and thereby diminish the quality of rose wines - more here), I decided to try a couple pink wines with dinner on Monday night.

My wife made one of her tried-and-true salads: grilled chicken, Gorgonzola, dried cranberries, candied walnuts, shallots and balsamic vinaigrette on romaine lettuce and spinach.

I chilled a bottle of the 2008 Hartford Family Rose of Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast, \$25, arrived recently in my wife's club shipment) and the **2008 Red Cote Rose (Artisan Family of Wines, Suisun Valley, \$12.99, cabernet sauvignon & petite sirah, courtesy of Jeff Miller)**.

Both wines we opened were produced by the saignée method - where some of the fermenting red wine is bled off before it takes on more than just a pink hue. Some people dump the pink stuff and focus on the red wine. Others see an opportunity to create an additional wine. That is why pink wines are so cheap to produce.

The Hartford Family had delicate bouncy red berry aromas but came off more hollow and struck me as a summer wine, an "ice cube wine". Alone, the Hartford Family was a bit cloying and simple. Its acidity was lower than that of the Red Cote. This made it come across as flatter when paired with the salad.

**The Red Cote was crisper, more expressive of darker red fruit (did you see the color?) and more balanced. It was more complex as a solo sipper and stood up better to the salad (and more specifically, the vinaigrette). It seemed to enhance some of the textural and aromatic aspects of the Gorgonzola.**

Both carried their alcohol well - the Hartford Family, in particular, clocking in at 14.3% ABV.

When I pair wine and food, I look at how the body, weight and structure of the wine works with (but not necessarily matches) the food. Then I look for synergy. By that, I mean that rarer phenomenon that occurs when the food and wine are together in the mouth. Those pairings result in aromas and flavors beyond the sum of the two or one accentuating, or augmenting, the other. Many people don't look for this in food and wine pairing. No wonder, since it's an exception of the rule.

So, let me focus on the structure of these wines for a bit - and by that I mean on their sweetness. Many people see a pink wine and suspect that it will be candy-sweet. Both wines had some residual sugar, somewhere on the order of 1%. This is not a high amount at all and balance is everything.

It's a fine line to walk when it comes to residual sugar, though. A bone-dry rose may appeal to a classicist - at least in the abstract. Bone-dry roses are very good when well-made and they have a well-deserved place in the wine and food landscape. A touch of balanced sweetness, nonetheless, can do a lot for spicy dishes or for those rich ingredients like the Gorgonzola.

Maybe this is why it is said that many wine aficionados "talk dry but drink sweet".