

MENU

TUESDAY OCTOBER 31 2017

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OCTOBER 29 2017, 12:01AM, THE SUNDAY TIMES

Jeremy Clarkson: Wine bore's red? Wide-awake white? No, I'll take the vino in-betweeno

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Right, then. That's it. British summertime is over and for the next five months it will be constantly dark and cold and foggy. There will be steamed-up windows and runny noses too. So it's time to put away the Pimm's and break out the Bovril. Or is it?

coats, and our children will have pink cheeks and sparklers, and we'll be wondering how on earth it's possible for the smoke to blow into our eyes no matter which side of the fire we choose to stand.

Naturally our host will provide liquid refreshment, which will be either warm brown beer made by a brewery with a silly name, or mulled wine. Both of which will be disgusting, so I have a suggestion. If you are thinking of hosting a bonfire party, do what I'd do: serve only rosé wine. With lots of ice.

Some people find my love of lady petrol rather weird. And when I point out that Noel Gallagher has similar views, they look quizzical and say: "Well, he must be weird too." But we are not alone, because the world is divided into two distinct camps. Those who have realised that rosé is the only drink worth drinking. And a tiny number who haven't. Yet.

There was a time when you'd only drink rosé when you were staying with friends at their villa in the south of France, in August. You wouldn't dream of buying it in England, in November, because, well, you are a man and you have your own tankard in the pub and you wouldn't be seen dead drinking pink. But not any more.

Waitrose and Marks & Spencer say rosé sales have recently leapt by more than 100% and it's easy to see why. If you drink white

John Travolta had just pumped your heart full of neat adrenaline.

If, on the other hand, you choose to drink red, your face will be in the bouillabaisse by eight in the evening, and you'll snore all through the main. Rosé, meanwhile, steers a neat course through the two extremes, getting you nicely tipsy without waking you up in the night or putting you to sleep during the starter.

And there's more: if you drink rosé, everyone will know you know nothing about wine. This is a good thing because anyone who does know something about wine is incapable of keeping this knowledge to themselves.

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**Drink white and you'll be awake at 3am.
With red, your face will be in the soup by eight**

This is a problem for me at the moment because recently I was given a case of something called Château Cheval Blanc that was made in 1985. I'm told this is an excellent wine and should be shared only with those who'll truly appreciate it. Which would mean inviting that sort of person round to my house, and that's not something I'm prepared to do. In case they appreciate it out loud.

Mind you, things are worse in restaurants, because nothing — and I do mean nothing — causes my blood to boil quite so quickly as some pompous arse in red trousers sitting at the head of the table, poring over the wine list for half an hour, and then wasting another half an hour discussing his knowledge and brilliance with the sommelier.

has congratulated him on his “excellent choice”, there’s that whole swirling and examining against the light and sloshing procedure to be endured. I know he thinks that everyone round the table is sitting there, with faces like raisins, thinking: “What a cultured fellow this man must be” — but we are not. We are all sitting there thinking: “What an insufferable show-off.”

How would he feel if he climbed into the passenger seat of my car and I sat there in silence for an hour listening to the engine, and blipping the throttle occasionally? He’d think I’d taken leave of my senses. Almost certainly he’d say that a car is just a car and ask if I wouldn’t mind setting off some time this week. Well, quite.

To express his displeasure at a restaurant full of wine snobs, my dad, upon being asked to taste the wine, once took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeve and dipped his elbow into the glass before saying to the wine waiter in a loud voice: “Mmmm, yes. That’s delicious.”

Rosé gets round all that nonsense. You don’t have to let it breathe. You don’t have to swirl it around or smell its cork. And if you comment on its quality, or how it’s “opened up nicely”, people are going to laugh at you. I’m not saying all rosé is lovely. It isn’t. If it cost you £1.99 from the petrol station and it’s the colour of Ribena, and the bottle has a screw top, it’ll make you go cross-eyed every time you take a sip. But if it’s a Château Minuty or a Whispering Angel or, **best of all, a Château Léoube, you can cut the top of the bottle off with a sword and get cracking immediately because it will be tremendous.**

I’m really not alone in this view. I took two bottles of Léoube to a friend’s dinner party the other night and before we’d even sat down it had all gone. No one there was drinking anything else. And yet here’s the strangest thing. Most restaurant wine lists have 800 pages of wine that’s red or white, and then a Post-it note on the back listing the two they have that are pink. British Airways doesn’t serve rosé at all. Not even in the lounge.