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Boisset Collection founder
Jean-Charles Boisset at
Raymond Vineyards in
St. Helena, CA.

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Cherry Picking

ITALY'S CERSUOLO D'ABRUZZO IS THE ROBUST ROSÉ OF THE SEASON by Stacy Slinkard

IT IS NO SECRET that Montepulciano reigns supreme as the red grape of Abruzzo, but what is a well-kept secret is the region's outstanding rosé, Cerasuolo, made from the industrious variety. While most notable rosé-producing regions yield lighter styles, Cerasuolo (pronounced *Chair-ah-SWA-low*) bucks the trends by bringing serious pigment, structure, and alcohol to the glass. Its vibrant cherry color and flavor profile get a nod from the name itself, which translates as "cherry red."

Tucked between the Apennines and the Adriatic Sea, Abruzzo makes a wide range of styles from Montepulciano that spans from lighter-styled, fruity reds to complex, ageworthy offerings, reflecting the limitless versatility of the grape. Between that heterogeneity and consumer expectations for rosé, newcomers to Cerasuolo may be surprised by what they discover. From its deep pink color (thanks to a short maceration of 24 hours or less) to its ripe red-berry character, it thrills with a brilliant tension between freshness and structure that's rarely seen in the category.

Typically matured in stainless-steel tanks for a few months before bottling, it's a relatively weighty wine, clocking in at a minimum 12% ABV, with most examples hovering around 14%; in addition to generous fruit, it's filled with extroverted fragrances that range from florals and orange zest to rustic, herbal, and savory notes, all bound to a backbone of bright, lively acidity. It is, in other words, a stunning reflection of both place and variety. In the former case, Abruzzo is uniquely influenced by both the breezes

off the Adriatic and the elevations of the Apennine foothills, where plenty of sunshine is balanced by cooler nights. In the latter case, growing in a heady mix of sandy clay soils, Montepulciano is late-ripening and thick-skinned, ensuring the aforementioned deep pigmentation, malleable, well-integrated tannins, and soft, ripe fruit flavors.

of Cerasuolo, many are more than ready to experience a rosé that is so much more than a simple summertime quaff. Indeed, it's perfectly positioned to entice consumers that favor the freshness found in lighter reds like Schiava or Beaujolais. And given its bright flavor profile, engaging structure, and snappy acidity, it boasts remarkable food-pairing potential, shining



*Pictured
are some
recommended
bottlings from
the author.*

Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo is the newest DOC in the Abruzzo region, established in 2010 to highlight these remarkable rosés made from some 2,500 acres of vines with a minimum of 85% Montepulciano, which consistently overdeliver in terms of both value and crowd-pleasing ability. While most wine lovers have not heard

alongside everything from charcuterie and wild game to fish and poultry to roasted beets and seasonal summer salads.

In short, its singular appeal speaks for itself: No wonder that efforts are currently underway to market single-vineyard Cerasuolos, something rarely seen in the world of rosé production. ■