

The Potential and future of Bobal in high quality Rosés

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Abstract

Motivation for Choosing This Topic

Consumption of rosé has seen a rising demand globally, as it is considered a versatile wine with a refreshing taste that appeals to a broad spectrum of consumers. Despite living in a country where people generally aren't that attracted to this wine style, I consider myself an increasing consumer of rosé. While the most popular Spanish grape varieties, Garnacha and Tempranillo, are producing some of the best quality rosés in Spain, other varieties like Bobal remain relatively unknown despite its potential for producing similar quality wine styles.

In this thesis I explore the potential of Bobal in creating high quality rosé wines, driven by its unique characteristics that can produce distinctive rosé profiles. As a supporter of local grape varieties and someone originally from the Valencia region, I feel an extra motivation for this subject.

Furthermore, as a qualified and relatively experienced winemaker, I am eager to start my own project to produce a successful premium Bobal rosé under my own label and contribute to that recognition that I think it well deserves. For me, achieving this would be a dream come true.

Problem/Objective

Bobal, a grape variety indigenous to the Requena Utiel appellation (Valencia, Spain), has historically been undervalued and primarily used in bulk wine production or as a blending component due to its high tannins and colour intensity. Its potential for making high-quality wines has traditionally been overlooked. As a result, Bobal rosés are generally unknown nationwide and even more so abroad, not typically associated with high-quality wines, particularly in the rosé category.

The primary objective of this thesis is to investigate Bobal's potential in producing high-quality rosé wines. This research seeks to contribute valuable insights to the understanding and appreciation of Bobal in the context of rosé wine production both in the present and for future considerations within the wine industry.

The following points were considered:

- Analyse the viticultural and oenological characteristics of Bobal.
- Assess the sensory profile and how Bobal-based rosé wines are doing in the market.
- Compare the quality of Bobal rosé wines with established rosé varieties..
- Suggestions for improving perception and recognition

Methodology

The methodology includes:

- Literature Review: A comprehensive analysis of existing research on Bobal as a grape variety, in the rosé wine production, and its market trends.
- Viticultural and Winemaking Study: Examination of Bobal growing environment, grape growing conditions and winemaking practices within its cultivating territories.
- Local producer interviews visiting vineyards and wineries to gain valuable insights into their viticultural and winemaking practices as well as their point of view on current and future market trends.
- Sensory Analysis: I organised several blind tasting with trained panels and consumer groups to evaluate the sensory attributes of Bobal rosé wines.
- Comparative Analysis: Benchmarking Bobal rosé wines against other quality rosé wines in terms of sensory characteristics.

Results-Content

A market analysis of major Spanish online wine retailers was conducted. Results showed that Garnacha and Tempranillo represent 22% and 13% of rosé wines, respectively, while Bobal accounts for only 1%. Bobal rosés are more frequently found on producers' own websites. In the research 36 wineries were identified, producing 44 Bobal rosé labels in Spain, with an averaging 8.8 euros per bottle, only a couple exceeding 15 euros.

Interviews with seven local producers—Aleph Winery, Nodus, Gratias, Dussart-Pedrón, Baldozar, Cueva, and Lupanda—provided insights into their viticultural and winemaking practices for high-quality Bobal rosé. They agreed that Bobal has significant potential due to its vibrant colour, fruity aromas, balanced acidity, and terroir expression. Achieving this requires careful attention to vineyard details, selecting the right picking dates (10-20 days before those for reds), and meticulous winemaking techniques, including management of maceration times, fermentation temperatures, and yeast strains.

Blind tasting sessions were organised with three groups: social wine consumers, wine enthusiasts, and WSET Diploma members. Each session included 5 to 6 rosé wines priced between 8 to 15 euros, including two Bobal rosés. Social wine consumers ranked Bobal among the top three; wine enthusiasts rated it the highest; and WSET Diploma members gave it high scores.

Conclusion

This research provides significant insights into the potential of the Bobal grape for high-quality rosé wine production. The findings indicate that Bobal, when grown and vinified under optimal conditions, can indeed produce rosé wines with desirable sensory attributes and competitive quality. Future considerations should focus on improving expectations and acceptance amongst consumers through both traditional and online distribution channels, strong marketing campaigns and boosting further the wine tourism to improve the market positioning.