THE FOURTH WALL’S
WINE TASTING WITH
OLD WESTMINSTER WINERY

• Take it Easy
• Rosé

DRINK DRAMATURGY

Rosé can feel distinctly modern, but it is as old as wine itself. Evidence suggests that some of the earliest wines were rosés, and that rosé was the precursor to red wine. In order to understand rosé, we must first remember how red and white wines are made. It all comes down to skin contact. Red wine grapes are fermented with their skins, which infuse the juice with their pigments and tannins prior to pressing. White wine is made by pressing the grapes before fermentation starts to lower the presence of tannins in the final product.

There are two main ways to make rosé: maceration and saignée. During maceration, the red wine grapes are crushed and allowed to sit with the skins for a short period of time, usually under 24 hours. Once the desired color is achieved, the must is pressed to remove the skins, and the juice is transferred to a second container where it can continue to ferment in the same manner as white wine. The saignée method involves starting with red wine must and, as the name implies, “bleeding off” around ten percent of the juice. This process results in a more concentrated red wine and a flavorful byproduct that can be fermented separately as rosé. While there is no doubt that high quality rosé can be made with either technique, the saignée method can be controversial, with some critics denouncing its lack of intentionality and others praising its creative, no-waste approach.

Another commonly repurposed product of winemaking is pomace—the skins, seeds, and stems that remain after the must is pressed. Piquette is a wine-adjacent drink made by rehydrating pomace to create a liquid that can be pressed and consumed as is, or fermented and bottled to create a light, fizzy beverage that is low in alcohol. Piquette has been consumed by vineyard workers since antiquity but has found little popularity outside this niche. Old Westminster is among a handful of wineries responsible for reintroducing the humble product to a modern audience.

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