



WILL LYONS | DRINK

## Kylie rosé or Snoop Dogg red? Celebrity wines: tested

NEW

Our critic separates the cynical tie-ins from the labours of love

Will Lyons | Wednesday August 30 2023, 5:00pm, The Sunday Times

Share    

Save 

Are there any celebrities who haven't thought about launching their own wine or spirits brand? I ask because every year we seem to have another film star, retired sportsman or pop singer turning their hand to the drinks business.

Making a splash recently is the rapper Snoop Dogg, who wants us to try his full-bodied Californian red straight from the fridge (rather him than me). More excitingly, every bottle has a QR code on the label that can be scanned to summon a hologram of the "Doggfather" onto your smartphone to answer any questions. The suspiciously limited range of answers makes it hard to believe he's actually in the cellar replying to every query, so instead I asked via his publicist how he got into wine. Was there some sort of epiphany? Not really, the rapper replied. Just that he "slowly started to realise that wine can bring out a great conversation with friends and loved ones". He's not wrong there.

Who knows if the winemakers chase the endorsement or the celebrity approaches the vineyard, but Kylie Minogue has shifted more than four million bottles since putting her name to a series of largely inoffensive rosés. In 2017 George Clooney and his associates sold their Casamigos tequila brand for a cool \$1 billion.

We've come a long way since Cliff Richard had the market to himself with his middle-of-the-road Algarve rosé. Over the years he has been joined by Sting, with perfectly respectable chianti from his own estate, and Gary Barlow, whose sauvignon – like his music – has grown on me the more I'm exposed to it. Most recently Alex James of Blur has been extolling the virtues of his Britpop fizz served with ice (although personally I think it's too good for that).

Hollywood gives us Cameron Diaz, who promised a "new standard of wine" with her organic range, and Sarah Jessica Parker, whose sauvignon blanc is hard to find now she is back on our screens in *And Just Like That...* Most famous of the lot is the wildly successful Miraval Rosé from Brad Pitt and (before their divorce) Angelina Jolie. Sports stars have also piled in. The cricketers Ricky Ponting and Ian Botham have both made a good fist of it but the ice hockey star Wayne Gretzky, whose white I tasted in Canada, should go straight to the sin bin.

The quality of celebrity wines is getting better, though. After a few PR disasters most stars are now shrewd enough to team up with someone who knows what they are doing. Those who own the vineyard and take an active interest in production are still most likely to make wines of real quality and character. Of these, by far the best are Sam Neill, who owns the excellent Two Paddocks winery in New Zealand; Francis Ford Coppola with his Inglenook estate in Napa; and Kyle MacLachlan's Pursued by Bear in Washington State. Pitt is also said to be personally involved in Miraval, and given his partnership with the respected Perrin winemaking dynasty it's no wonder his rosé is so good.



### 2021 Two Paddocks Pinot Noir

New Zealand (13.5%)

Hennings Wine, £36.95

Sam Neill owns the vineyard and his team has crafted a serious pinot, with deft notes of violet and cherry.