



## “BY THE WAY, WHICH ONE’S PINK?”

- WINEMAKER, VANESSA WONG

Every few years or so we participate in a wine tasting event at a local restaurant, Barndiva, called the Pink Party where everyone is encouraged to wear pink. This got me thinking about the idea of pink. It's a weird word: the word pink in French or Spanish is rose or rosa, which makes a lot more sense because a rose flower can be pink. Pink is actually an odd sounding word, change one letter and it goes from pink to oink which actually kind of makes sense cause pigs are pink. But where did the word come from and what the heck are pinking shears and what does that have to do with the color pink? These kinds of questions always cause me to fall down the rabbit hole of online research and, the next thing I know, I am watching AC/DC thrash around to *Sink the Pink* on YouTube. By the way, the color pink is named after a flower of the species *Dianthus* also commonly known as a pink. Pinks have frilly edged petals which is the etymology of pinking shears. Thank you, Wikipedia.

There is an association with the color pink and baby girls, springtime, and newness. It's the color of romance, clouds at dawn, cherry blossoms, and cotton candy. But what else does pink signify? Pink can signify many things: innocence, femininity, womanhood. Even Victoria's Secret made a bold all caps marketing statement by naming a line of their lingerie stores: PINK. But when did pink become a feminine color? Because, interestingly enough, pink originally was a masculine color. Men wore red and boys wore pink being a pale tint of red, sort of like a mini-me fashion choice. Throughout the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, people started to associate the color pink with baby girls and blue with baby boys. Thus, the association between pink and femininity started to take a toe hold and became the accepted norm.

Wearing colored ribbons to promote awareness to a cause is a somewhat recent phenomenon. I remember folks taking a renewed interest in the meaning of the yellow ribbon from that '70s hit: *Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Ole Oak Tree* from the very quintessentially '70's trio Tony Orlando and Dawn by festooning everything with yellow ribbons to draw attention to those held captive for 444 days during the Iranian hostage crises. Then, in the early '90s, a red ribbon was used to signify public awareness of HIV/AIDS and efforts to fund research for a cure and services for treatment of the disease. Right around the same time, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and the organizers of Breast Cancer Awareness Month started wearing pink ribbons to show moral support for those with breast cancer, and to support initiatives promoting education about screening and treatment.



I didn't think much about breast cancer awareness until well after college. When I was in college studying viticulture and enology, I had a classmate and study buddy whose name was Toni. Toni was a different kind of student from myself. Unlike I, who studied winemaking straight out of high school, Toni was an older student. Toni was much different from the other older students returning to their studies after trying out a different profession, however, as she was starting college at middle age. In our study sessions together, she shared with me that she had married young and spent the better part of the early years of her adulthood being a housewife complete with watching soap operas and reading Harlequin romance novels to stave off the boredom while she kept house. At some point during this time, Toni by some stroke of chance discovered wine. This discovery led her to realize that she had, to cheekily reference one of her favorite soap operas, *One Life to Live* and that this life to live was her own life which included her own aspirations and dreams. Part of her dream was to become a winemaker, so she uprooted herself from her domestic existence in small town Texas and moved to California to start her life anew as a middle-aged college student having graduated from high school before I even was born.

Toni and I spent a lot of time together because not only did we study for our wine program classes together, she also had to do the dreaded 18 units of General Education requirements that every undergrad student had to fulfill back then and she crammed those courses in during summer school much like the way I did. UC Davis was on the quarter system so in the summer an already briskly paced 10-week quarter was a sprint of six weeks with thousands of pages of reading and papers to write every other day. We spent a lot of time hunting for air conditioning and discussing the books we had to read. Certainly, we got our studying done, but we also had a good time together talking and sharing life and laughs. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Toni and I were on the committee to make the Dept. of Viticulture & Enology float. She only hesitated but a moment when I asked for a volunteer to drive the tractor pulling the float.



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She's the one who taught me that you didn't need makeup to look good but that a good pedicure could make you look pretty darn put together, especially in Davis where shorts and sandals were the de rigueur wardrobe needed to beat the summer heat. And she was a hoot to hang out with. I always loved the way she would taste a wine and declare, "Mmmmm, this is sooooo goooood" in her broad northeast Texas drawl with a wine glass cradled at her nose. For me, a 20-year-old, she was the only friend I had that was not only married, but was married, divorced, and remarried. She had twice the life experience that I had and the juiciest Texan twang to relate those life stories which I appreciated and so enjoyed. I always thought Toni was brave because she decided to take her life in a new direction and start over which to me, the then hardly adult 20-year-old, was pretty amazing. To the now past middle age me, it is pretty darn astounding to contemplate.

Toni continued to demonstrate her plucky and courageous nature when she showed up at my and Nick's wedding with a broad brimmed hat stylishly covering up her hair loss from chemotherapy. Regardless of how she felt or what was ailing her, she was ready to celebrate our big day. She had traveled up from Central California, where she was a senior Winemaker at Robert Mondavi's Woodbridge winery. This cancer thing was not going to stop her from making the trek out to our estate vineyard way out on the West Sonoma Coast. Toni was the first person I ever knew that had breast cancer. She was also the first person I ever knew who died of breast cancer. Sadly, Toni lost her long battle with breast cancer in 2009.

If you had asked me 20 years ago, I would have thought that a breast cancer diagnosis was a death warrant. But since my own diagnosis last year of DCIS--a non-invasive and entirely treatable form of breast cancer--I have reflected on what I have learned and witnessed in these intervening 20 years. A tremendous amount of progress has been made in the detection and treatment of breast cancer. I now know that it can be a disease where people not only survive, but often thrive after treatment. I have family members and friends who have been treated for different types of breast cancer and have had good outcomes. Throughout the years, I had many and frequent screenings - both mammograms and ultrasounds - and while nobody ever regards mammograms as a barrel of fun, they sure beat having to fight invasive cancer. After one, I was treated with a lumpectomy: Hello side-boob Frankenstein scar! And a month of radiation treatment: Hello crispy fried nipple skin! And, I am on a years-long hormonal therapy medication: Yowza, insta-menopause! Early detection is key to early treatment and positive outcomes and that's what the pink ribbons are supposed to remind us of. So, go get your mammograms on time and regularly. Mammograms themselves do not prevent cancer but can catch it early. Early detection can mean a better outcome with less treatment.

And what else is pink? Pink is the color of our rosé wine. I remember one time I traveled to the south of France with some college friends who were also in the wine program, and we were horrified when we ordered a rosé and witnessed the waiter take a bottle of red wine and a bottle of white wine and mix them together into a small pitcher to make a "rosé" wine. I thought my friend Todd, who first introduced me to what a high-quality rosé could be with Domaine Tempier's famous Bandol rosé, was going to have a coronary watching how this wine was being concocted. I can tell you that this is not how we make our rosé wine! Nor do we make it by drawing off juice from the grape skins of a red wine vinification which is a common method that some wineries do to increase the concentration of their red wines - a practice called saignée. We make our rosé from Pinot Noir by pressing the whole grape clusters - much like the process they use to make Champagne wine in the Champagne region of France. This method is slower and intentional and therefore is more cost and labor intensive, but it produces a juice that has very fine aromas and a very light color. There is just the faintest blush of color: un vin rosé, that is to say, a wine that has been pinked. The color is delicate and likewise the aroma is delicate and fresh because we put as much care and attention to making our rosé as we would with any of the wines from our own estate vineyard.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and, as October is harvest time for us, remembering to promote education and advocacy for breast cancer patients during this time of year can be a little tricky. So, I would like to remind you this month and any month of the year to remember to get screened or to nag someone to get screened, to spread the word to highlight the importance of early detection, timely diagnosis and comprehensive treatment, and to provide support to those who have had a diagnosis to have courage to fight breast cancer and hope for the future. So whether you [Wear It Pink](#), [Pink the Rink](#) or drink pink, remember to raise a glass to those who battle breast cancer and remember to Think Pink.



I MISS YOU, TONI!

