

A VINEYARD blooming with wild flowers of the Galilee. (Galil Mountain Winery)



# A SWEET YEAR FOR WINE



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

The wine used for *Kiddush* every Friday night is very personal and dictated by family tradition. Over the years, many have reverted to using dry wines. Sweet Kiddush wines are in decline, though the use of grape juice remains popular. However, due to family tradition, many still insist on a sweet red sacramental wine. I usually use the dry wine we are going to drink with the meal for Kiddush. Rosh Hashanah is the only time when I actually recommend a sweet wine for the blessing.

If during the New Year meal we are encouraged to eat sweet foods cumulatively in the apple and honey, I believe we should insist on a sweet wine in honor of the wish for a sweet year. As it is the Jewish New Year, it should be a good one. Probably Yarden Heights Wine is one of the best, but there is a great variety of dessert wines. Failing that, you can always fall back on Moscatos, like the good value entry level Buzz or

higher quality and more authentic Bartenura from Italy.

Wines come at all price points. Here are a few recommendations.

**WINE DRINKERS: Up to NIS 50**  
**Golan Heights, Hermon, Mount Hermon White 2022**

This is always a best buy. It is so fruity, crisp, and refreshing, with aromas of citrus, green apple, and floral notes. The Golan Heights Winery is very consistent and has been since its founding, 40 years ago. This is one of the best value whites under NIS 50.

**Recanati Yonatan White 2022**

A fresh, fragrant white wine blend made from Colombard and Sauvignon Blanc. The Yonatan label is one of the winery's entry-level wines. Recanati Winery is now the largest winery in the Upper Galilee, and it has just opened its new visitors' center.

**Barkan Gold Merlot 2021**

A new cleaned-up label for the Gold wines is most welcome, as the new

version carries more credibility. The wine is medium-bodied, fruity, easy-drinking, with pleasant fruit aromas and a flavorful finish. Good value. Barkan, founded in 1990, is Israel's second-largest winery based at Hulda. It is situated alongside Israel's largest vineyard.

**WINE LOVERS: NIS 51-NIS 99**  
**Teperberg Impression Chardonnay 2022**

This is well balanced with some tropical notes, backed by vanilla from oak maturation, with an underlying freshness. Teperberg is our largest family winery. It was founded in 1870 in the Old City of Jerusalem. Now situated at Tzora.

**Psagot Sauvignon Blanc 2022**

Great summer wine. Aromatic with tropical fruit, crisp and refreshing. This is a grape variety we make well in Israel. Psagot is the largest winery in the Central Mountains and one of the most beautiful wineries in Israel.

**Dalton Alma White 2021**

This is my choice of a Mediterranean

white wine blend. It is made from Roussanne and Viognier, balanced with a little Colombard and Grenache Blanc. It is nicely restrained on the nose without the mass of tropical fruit that bedevils many Israeli whites. It has a great mouth feel, full flavored without being too big, and has a long, fresh finish. Dalton Winery will soon reach its 30th anniversary. It is making wines with a lot of verve and innovation.

**Binyamina Reserve Viognier 2022**

This viognier shows a fatness and body, with the classic delicate aroma of apricots and peaches. It also has good acidity, providing a refreshing finish. Nice wine. Binyamina Winery is in its 71st year, having been founded in 1952. The winery was then known as Eliaz.

**Amphorae Med Grenache Blanc 2022**

It is a pleasure sometimes to taste something different from Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. We are mainly familiar with the Grenache Noir, but this is the white varietal. It makes an understated, not blowsy white wine with good



From L: Teperberg Chardonnay; 1848 Orient; Mount Hermon White; Tulip Cabernet Sauvignon; Recanati Yonatan; Galil Mountain Petit Verdot; Silk and Spice; Porta 6 Red; Yatir Petit Verdot; Feldstein Argaman. (Photos: Wineries mentioned; Yatir: Eyal Keren)

complexity. Amphorae Winery, apart from being one of the most beautiful wineries in the country, is also a leader in wine tourism.

#### Tura Mountain Vista Rosé 2022

A “tutti-frutti” type of rosé with a touch of sweetness. Serve it cold, and it is very drinkable. A wine to quaff when temperatures are high. It is made from Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon from vineyards in the Central Mountains at an elevation of more than 800 meters above sea level.

#### Tabor Eco Rosé 2022

A blend of the Spanish and Italian varieties, Tempranillo and Barbera, both grown in the Galilee. It is nicely colored, with aromas of red grapefruit and a flinty acidity. Tabor is a proponent of what they call “ecological” vineyards, hence the brand “Eco.” It is all about putting biodiversity back into the vineyard.

#### 1848 Winery, 5th Generation, Orient Red 2021

I have written about this wine before, but it is so understated and elegant, I think it is a great find. It is a Mediterranean blend of Marselan, Argaman, and Syrah. Well worth looking out for it, and it also is excellent value. Not for the first time I am saying this, but 1848 Winery is making some very fine wines these days.

#### Galil Mountain Stav Petit Verdot 2022

Petit Verdot is now our fifth most-planted variety. It is particularly successful in blends. It is a grape variety that has taken to Israel. Galil Mountain offers this new varietal at a very reasonable price. It is lively, with a good mouth feel, and has elegance rare in Petit Verdot. I really loved it. Galil Mountain is a winery that is focused on sustainability and the Upper Galilee in equal measure.

#### Tulip Cabernet Sauvignon 2022

Cabernet Sauvignon is still the most famous brand in Israeli wine. It has more of a following than any winery, brand, or label. This version has great typicity, with up-front blackcurrant and blackberry fruit, a good structure, and a well-balanced finish. Tulip Winery is famously known for supporting and employing adults with special needs, and it knows how to make great wine.

#### Hayotzer Lyrica Mourvedre 2019

This interested me because it is a varietal Mourvedre. Usually, it is used in blends. Hayotzer has a good track record with Mediterranean varieties. What I liked about this wine was the chewy texture. You can recognize it by the over-heavy bottle and the face in silhouette on the label (not unlike the iconic Opus One label). When will wineries learn that we are not seduced by the weight of the bottle!? Anyway, back to the wine: Hayotzer is a winery that majors in the art of the winemaker... and it has a good one.

I am really into Portuguese wines at present. Most are blends, and many wineries don't even bother writing the grape varieties on the label. This saves fretting if you have not heard of them! There are two best buys at present: **Porta 6** and **Silk and Spice**. Both offer great value which runs through a full range of wines. Furthermore, there are normally good deals for those buying a number of bottles at a time. They both seem to be everywhere, though if you can't find them, **Porta 6** will definitely be at Derech Ha'yayin wine stores, and **Silk and Spice** at Tiv Taam supermarkets. Both offer great drinkability... and kosher drinkers need not despair; **Porta 6** also offers a kosher version.

#### CONNOISSEURS: NIS 100-NIS 149 Carmel Xperiment Colombard 2022

This is a new kid on the block. An ex-

perimental label introduced by Carmel Winery. I am a great believer in Colombard (many Israelis call it French Colombard). It shows well in our climate. It has a flowery aroma and a piercing acidity. It is expensive because of its rarity, but it is an ideal wine for an aperitif or to drink on a long hot, humid evening, and we have a few of those. Carmel is our largest winery and remains the historic winery of Israel.

#### Maia Mare Red 2022

A super chewy, refreshing Mediterranean blend of Carignan, Syrah, and Mourvedre. It shows great fruit, with a backdrop of local Mediterranean herbs. Maia Winery specializes in Israeli Mediterranean wines. Very drinkable.

#### Feldstein Argaman 2021

This is the Israeli variety, which when you see it, you know it is produced in Israel and nowhere else. Furthermore the owner-winemaker of Feldstein Winery is the father of quality Argaman. This expression has good berry fruit with a peppery note and a very fresh acidity. It is also comparatively low alcohol. Of course, it is not Cabernet, but it is ours and I believe in Argaman

#### FEINSCHMECKERS: NIS 150 + Bat Shlomo Collage 2020

Bat Shlomo Vineyards makes a limited edition single vineyard wine from Malbec and Merlot. I tasted it before, but this time I really enjoyed it. It has bags of fruit but is backed by vanilla and other flavors that come from oak aging. It is complex with great length. Nice wine. Bat Shlomo Vineyards has a great visitors' center and is set alongside the most prestigious boutique hotel you can imagine.

#### Yatir Petit Verdot 2020

One of the best Petit Verdots in the country. Deep, complex but far from

bombastic, this is a very fine example of the quality of Petit Verdot when made as a varietal. Yatir Winery is situated at Tel Arad in the northeast Negev, and the vineyards lie in the Yatir Forest. It is the premier winery in the South.

#### Golan Heights, Yarden Yonatan Vineyard Syrah 2020

Syrah is a grape very suitable for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant, and it seems to particularly thrive in Israel. This is one of the best we have. A single vineyard wine from the central Golan. It has great berry fruit intermingled with layers of earth, smoked meat, black pepper, and herbal notes. Beautiful wine. Open it, decant it, and give it time. Good job again... from the Golan Heights Winery.

#### Netofa Matzpen TourSyr 2021

An interesting intense blend of the Portuguese variety Touriga Nacional and the French Syrah, already very at home in Israel. The deep blue front label carries little information, which has the message “taste the wine without preconceived ideas.” The deepness of the Touriga Nacional (color, fruit aroma) and the freshness of the Syrah combine well. It needs a little more bottle age to come around but is already drinking well.

In times of discord, I believe wine is a great unifier. If we drank more wine and less coffee, maybe Israel would be a more peaceful place. I believe the Jewish festivals are a time to support the growers, winemakers, and wineries. They need and deserve your support. This Rosh Hashanah, put an Israeli wine on the table... it is the equivalent of waving an Israeli flag! *Shana tova!*

*The writer is a winery insider turned wine writer, who has advanced Israeli wines for 35 years. He is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore.com*