

AS WE head into Rosh Hashanah, we are in mid-harvest. (Mendy Hechtman/Flash90)



ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

• ADAM MONTEFIORE

Here we go again, another Rosh Hashanah. It is wine-buying time. Just be sure to buy at the price point and wine style you want. Don't be swayed by the worry of what others think. Wine is meant to be enjoyed, and this can happen at every level. Here are some recommendations:

WINE DRINKERS: Up to NIS 50

Hayotzer Bereshit Petit Verdot 2021. It is rare to find entry-level wines that are not Cabernet and Merlot. That is why I was drawn to this Petit Verdot. This is the fourth most planted variety in Israel, usually used in blends. It is worth a try. Hayotzer Winery is a reasonably new brand created by a branch of the Shor family, who have been making wine for a long time.

Carmel Selected Merlot 2021. Many wine lovers say to me "I would never drink Selected." However, millions of

bottles of this brand are sold. People just don't talk about it. I think these wines offer very good value for the price, and they are great wines to drink, slightly chilled. This Merlot is a good example. Light but full of flavor, even refreshing.

Barkan Gold Edition Cabernet Sauvignon 2020. The Gold Edition of Barkan Winery is a sure bet for those buying on price. This Cabernet Sauvignon has good fruit, is well balanced and easy to drink. Barkan is today our largest winery with a Master of Wine winemaker. It offers great value for the price. If you are looking for whites, Barkan's Classic Sauvignon Blanc and Gold Edition Gewurztraminer are also recommended in the under NIS 50 category.

WINE LOVERS: NIS 50-100

Tabor Adama Sauvignon Blanc 2021. Israeli Sauvignon Blanc has come on leaps and bounds. These days, I prefer these to Israeli Chardonnays. This Tabor expression is a home banker. Aromatic and refreshing, it

is consistently one of our best Sauvignons. Tabor are masters of white wines. This comes in a screw cap, which I love. It makes it so easy.

Recanati Galil Sauvignon Blanc 2021. When looking for good value Sauvignon Blancs, I was also drawn to this one by Recanati Winery. It ticks all the boxes. It offers a touch of grapefruit with a basket full of tropical fruit, backed by a piercing acidity. Recanati Winery, founded in 2000, has become one of our most consistent larger wineries. They have just moved to a spanking new winery in the Galilee.

Dalton White of Earth 2021. Variety is the spice of life. Another Sauvignon Blanc, but this one was spontaneously fermented in an amphora and was aged on its lees for six months. The wine has notes of citrus, grapefruit and tropical fruit, with a rounded flavor and texture. Original. Certainly the winemaker of Dalton is very playful. Lots of new initiatives, experimental winemaking and

new launches. Worth watching them closely.

Psagot Rosé 2021. A beautiful, clean, refreshing rosé from Psagot Winery. It has a delicate onion skin color with citrusy aromas, and then you get the acidity which cuts through to give a clean finish. Psagot is the largest winery in the Central Mountains region, providing quality wines at every price point. This style of wine matches our cuisine and climate perfectly.

Zion Capital Lions Gate 2020. This was a lovely surprise. With medium weight, it is an interesting blend of Petite Sirah, Merlot and Barbera. Unusual bedfellows, but it works. Fruity, vibrant, fresh, with flavor, balance and poise. Zion Winery is our oldest existing winery, founded in 1848 by the Shor family, which has undergone a quality revolution in the last few years. Their watchwords are great value.

Pinto Shiraz 2020. Dessert wines are all the rage as winery pioneers make the desert bloom with vineyards. The



(L TO R) Yarden Pinot Noir, Barkan Gold Cabernet, Vitkin Carignan, Galil Mountain Yiftach, Dalton White of the Earth, Zion Capital Lions Gate, Tulip Franc Merlot, Miraval Rose. (Photos: Wineries mentioned; Miraval: Eyal Keren)

newest winery is Pinto, founded in Yeroham. Shiraz seems to grow well everywhere in Israel. This has the characteristic blackberry fruit and a touch of ground pepper with a meaty note. Full flavored without being too big and in your face. Look for the nice labels with an illustration of a desert fox. Their vineyard is in Wadi Shualim (foxes).

Shiloh Legend Fidler 2020. Another of those creative blends. This time made from Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot, with a dollop of Shiraz. It is fruit forward, full bodied but kind of enticing. It is not a bashful wine but very drinkable. Shiloh is an award-winning winery with amazing consistency at home and abroad. Some of their more expensive varieties are great, but this represents such good value.

Yatir Mt. Amasa 2019. This is a home banker red, which never disappoints. It is a blend of Cabernet, Shiraz, Petit Verdot, Tannat (rare in Israel) and Malbec. The wine offers good fruit, is chewy in the mouth, with good complexity and a nicely weighted finish. It comes from Yatir Winery, situated in the northeastern Negev at Tel Arad, but the vineyards are in Yatir Forest, which is the southern tip of the Judean or Hebron Hills.

CONNOISSEURS: NIS 100-150

Miraval Rosé 2021. This is the brand created by celebs Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt that has survived their separation. It is a Provence rosé, which comes in a stylish dumpy bottle and is not cheap. However, Israelis love it. What is notable is that a kosher cuvee has been produced, so those observing kashrut may enjoy it for the first time.

Razi'el Rosé 2021. Most rosés have reasonably the same profile. This is refreshingly different, courageous and

characterful. Aged and fermented in 600-liter oak barrels, the resulting wine has a deep fruit character and a broad medium-bodied flavor. I call it rosé with an attitude. A perfect food wine, and I like the useful glass stopper! Razi'el is the new small winery founded by the Ben-Zaken family, owners of Domaine du Castel.

Yarden Pinot Noir 2019. I tasted this the other day and really enjoyed it. We don't have much good Pinot in Israel, but the northern Golan is as cool as we can get. It has that enticing red fruit and sour cherry with floral notes, backed by good structure from oak aging. The Golan Heights Winery was the pioneer of Pinot, along with so many other grape varieties. This should not be forgotten, a very nice wine.

Tulip Franc Merlot 2020. David Bar-Ilan is a very good winemaker. His wines are always interesting, inventive and of very good quality. Here, the greenness of the Cabernet Franc links well with the plush softness of the Merlot. Tulip Winery always engages the consumer.

Vitkin Carignan Old Vines 2019. Carignan is the adopted variety of Israel. It has been here for 150 years. The master of this variety is Vitkin Winery, Israel's leading ABC winery (Anything But Chard or Cab). It comes from old bush vines in the northern Coastal Plain. The wine has a nose of plum, berries and an earthy dirtiness that is attractive and gives character. In its own way, it is an Israeli classic.

Jezreel Valley Argaman 2019. Argaman is the most Israeli grape variety we have, and it is a specialty of Jezreel Valley Winery. The wine is never totally clean to me, but that adds character and interest. It has great fruit, a touch of pepper and a full flavor

with a refreshing finish. The Jezreel's Argaman was the big winner in this year's Decanter World Wine Awards. Not to be sneezed at!

Tura Mountain Heights 2019. This is a deep-colored Cabernet Sauvignon from the high-elevation Central Mountains. It is quite oaky and full-bodied, but the fruit accompanies it all the way from the first whiff until the long finish. Tura Winery consistently produces good wines.

FEINSCHMECKERS: NIS 150 +

Flam Camellia 2021. Flam Winery is one of our finest small wineries, owned by two brothers. This wine is named for their mother, who has been the backbone of the winery but behind the scenes. It is an exquisitely balanced Chardonnay. A nose of citrus and wildflowers, with an understated creamy note. The oak is there but is in the background in a supporting role.

Drimia Sfar 2020. This is a small winery with a high elevation vineyard, at over 800 meters elevation, in Susya, in the southern Central Mountains. It is a blend of Cabernet and Petit Verdot made by a very modest couple, whose wines I have come to respect. It is all in place: nice fruit, a certain elegance but leading through to a flavorful finish. High-quality wine.

Galil Mountain Yiftach Vineyard 2019. This is a varietal Petit Verdot that has elegance, great texture and power, if that is not a contradiction in terms. The aroma is of forest fruits and blackberries, with well-integrated oak flavors. Beautiful wine. Galil Mountain is a leader in sustainability and a champion of the Upper Galilee. All their fruit comes from their own vineyards.

Teperberg Legacy Petite Sirah 2018. A beautiful Petite Sirah. It is a variety I

love, which is well suited to Israel. It is a big wine with aromas of ripe blackberry and cherry fruit with more than a hint of violets. It is full on the palate with notes of coffee and gives way to a lingering well-balanced finish. Don't be put off by the bottle which is bombastic, flashy and unnecessary. However, Teperberg, our largest family winery, is making good wines at every price point, today.

THERE ARE a few wine writers, as opposed to wine critics, who write delightfully about wine. The greatest of them all is Hugh Johnson. The current maestro always worth seeking out is Andrew Jefford, who writes for Decanter. A third is Eric Asimov, who signed off last week as the wine writer for *The New York Times* with a beautiful piece.

Some of his prose I have to share with you. He wrote: "I consider learning to love wine more important than learning facts about it. Why? Because with study comes obligation but with love comes curiosity." He goes on to recommend learning about wine in the most natural of environments "with meals, friends and family, rather than in a more clinical setting. ...wine, like a meal, is a social pleasure."

So beautifully put and so true. With all the formal studying about wine and learning to taste by rote, it is important to remember the golden thread. Thank you for reminding us what it is all about.

Shana tova! ■

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