



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

Eat well, drink well

Rosh Hashanah is around the corner. From a wine point of view, it rivals Passover as the wine-buying peak of the year. Large family meals will be arranged. It is one of those occasions that is an opportunity to meet and get together, as much as anything else. Wine is central.

Much of the Jewish religion is celebrated around a table with your nearest and dearest, and wine is used both to sanctify the festival and celebrate the occasion.

Those buying wines will almost certainly be looking for something special to share with their guests, in order to honor the occasion. However, what they see as special will differ according to their budget, their regular wine purchases, and the number of people they are entertaining. Maybe there is a special bottle they have saved in their private cellar or wine fridge for this moment.

Wine drinkers looking for value, or the best quality-per-price ratio, will inevitably alight on wines in the “Wine Lovers” category. Then there are those who don’t regularly purchase wine, but will at Rosh Hashanah. For them, to put what I call a “Drinkers Wine” on the table may also be a statement.

Normally, wine lovers frown on those who choose to drink sweet kiddush wines. However, Rosh Hashanah is the right time for a sweet wine. A toast for a sweet new year deserves a sweet wine, but in honor of the holiday, make it a good one. Choose a quality dessert wine.

My recommendations are as follows.

WINE DRINKERS: Up to NIS 50

Hayotzer, Sketch Gewurztraminer 2024. Always wise to have a semi-dry wine on the festive table. There will always be someone in any family who appreciates it.

This is an aromatic Gewurztraminer grown in the Lower Galilee. Hayotzer is Arza Winery’s quality brand. Those who like a touch of sweetness will like this.

Barkan, Gold Cabernet Sauvignon 2024. The Gold Edition is a value label in the Barkan portfolio. Barkan, founded in 1990, vies with Carmel as our largest winery.

The wine is lightish but fruity, flavorful, easy drinking, and approachable. Probably best to serve it chilled. Good value.

WINE LOVERS: NIS 51-99

Golan Heights, Gamla Sauvignon Blanc 2025. Gamla has been a shining star in the QPR (quality per price) for decades. It still is across the range.

This Sauvignon Blanc shows good varietal typicity. It is crisp, aromatic, steely,



YOU CAN make a toast for the New Year with a good sparkling wine, like Yarden Brut Rose. (Photos: Wineries mentioned)

with a fresh acidity. A great-value white from Golan Heights Winery.

Recanati, Galilee Vineyards Chardonnay 2024. A modern-style Chardonnay. Rich, buttery Chardonnays are rarer these days. This one is fresh, elegant, and precise.

Recanati is the largest winery in the Upper Galilee. By the way, it is a beautiful winery to visit.

Galil Mountain, Galil Rose 2025. A lovely rose in a very attractive, innovative package. Made from a blend of Sangiovese, Tempranillo, Malbec, and Cabernet Franc, all grown in the Eastern Upper Galilee.

I believe rose matches the Israeli climate, cuisine, culture, and character. It suits the Israeli temperament. This expression is very good.

Dalton Estate Rose 2025. This ticks all the boxes. Beautiful color, crisp with

generous fruit, balanced finish – and it has a screw cap. For me, a big plus!

It is made from Shiraz, supplemented by Grenache, Mourvedre, and Barbera. This is so drinkable it slips down, and before you know it, you have finished the bottle.

Dalton Winery, already over 30 years old, is the pioneer of the Galilee.

Tulip Petite Sirah. This is a reasonably new wine from Tulip Winery, which is always inventive with its wines.

Petite Sirah, aka Durif, is a variety well suited to Israel. Most are big, beefy wines with everything on an outsize scale. Here, this is a more approachable Petite Sirah, tempered by Carignan and Viognier. It is medium-bodied, with good fruit and nicely drinkable. Flavorful but refreshing. Easy to enjoy.

Zion, Capital Lions Gate 2024. An interesting blend of Marselan, Grenache,

and Caladoc. It is juicy fruity, rough (in a nice way) and rustic, medium-bodied with great drinkability.

This wine, from Israel’s oldest existing winery, won a gold medal and was awarded 95 points at the Decanter WWA, the world’s most famous wine competition. It was the first equal Israeli wine in the competition, yet look at its price category! It has to be the best value by any criteria.

Teperberg, Inspire Gewurztraminer 2024. This is a beautiful dessert wine. Luscious and delicious. Serve it ice-cold. The perfect sweet wine for Rosh Hashanah, to accompany the traditional starter courses for the festival, to go with fruit-based desserts, blue cheeses, or to sip after dinner.

Teperberg is the third largest winery in Israel.

CONNOISSEURS: NIS 100-149

Scoria, Tel Phares Vineyard, Bashan 2025. By definition, my selection is usually from the larger, more well-known wineries because their wines are more accessible. This is a small winery from the Southern Golan Heights.

The blend is Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, the classic blend for Bordeaux whites, grown at high elevation in the Central Golan. The wine has nice citrus aromas, a good texture, and is well balanced. Nice little wine.

It is a wine certified by Tzohar Kashrut. I heartily approve that Tzohar now certifies about 30 Israeli wineries.

1848 Winery, Orient White 2025. Orient from 1848 Winery is an expression of Israeli Mediterranean blends. The wines are classy and elegant.

The Orient Red 2024 just received a Gold Medal and 95 points in the Decanter Competition in London. I wrote about it last time.

So, let’s concentrate on the white. It is a blend of Colombard, Chardonnay, and Roussanne. It is fragrant, has an extended mouthfeel and an attractive texture, which leads through to a long, well-balanced finish. Very nice wine.

Binyamina, Shoham Chardonnay 2025. This is more classic for Chardonnay lovers. Fermented and aged in barrel for six months. It has a tropical, citrus nose, a hint of buttery and vanilla notes, but also a fresh acidity running through it. Good quality wine.

Binyamina Winery is a 74-year-old winery.

Ramat Negev, Exodus White 2025. A desert blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, and Semillon from high-elevation Negev vineyards. It is full-bodied and floral, with crisp acidity yet flavorful.

Ramat Negev Winery, one of the pioneers of the Negev, is one of the most improved wineries in my book. Its wines are good at different price points.



SHANA TOVA! (L to R) Barkan Gold Cabernet Sauvignon; Zion Capital Lions Gate; Gamla Sauvignon Blanc; Netofa Gamay; Tulip Petite Sirah; Tzuba Metzuda; Vitkin Grenache; Yatir Amasa Rose.

Yatir, Mt. Amasa Rose 2025. A classy rose from Yatir Winery. It has the freshness and liveliness of the genre, but a little more fragrance and a better mouth-feel than standard roses.

It is made from Grenache Noir, Mourvedre, and Grenache Blanc from high-elevation Yatir Forest vineyards.

Amphorae, Terroir Capsouto Field Blend 2023. The late Jacques Capsouto was a famous New York restaurateur who, in his seventies, came to Israel and planted a vineyard. He was a pioneer of Southern Rhone varieties.

Amphorae Winery has paid homage to Capsouto's vineyard by making a field blend. This means that all the varieties (Cinsault, Cunoise, Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre) were harvested, fermented, and aged together.

It is an enchanting wine with an aroma of strawberry and red cherries and a fruit-driven flavor. Definitely chill it. Lovely wine, lovely idea!

Tabor, Artisanal Creation Syrah 2023. This is a varietal Syrah from a single vineyard on the Golan Heights. It has fruit, spice, and a smoked meat character. Artisanal is the quality umbrella brand for Tabor Winery's leading labels.

Netofa, Masei Gamay Noir 2025. Gamay is the grape of Beaujolais. I first came across Gamay here with a wine called Golan Village in the 1990s. I remember prime ministers Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak used to order it.

Now Netofa has introduced a new expression. It is light and fruity with cher-

ry-berry aromas, is easy drinking, and is truly gluggable. Serve chilled. A perfect lunchtime or brunch wine.

Carmel Signature, Govrin Vineyard Petite Sirah 2022. Carmel, the historic winery of Israel, is one of the prime pioneers of quality Petite Sirah in Israel.

This has deep black fruit with an attractive floral backdrop of violets. It is fruit-forward, full of flavor with earthy, meaty notes and a lingering finish. A lovely wine.

Jezreel Valley, Old Vines Carignan 2024. This is an Israeli classic from what I call our adopted variety. It is always robust and bold, with a blend of fruit and spice, a backdrop of oak, and a satisfying chewy flavor.

The Carignan comes from 48-year-old vines, and the wine is presented in a new, attractive label that represents the wine's earthiness.

Jerusalem Vineyard Winery, Windmill Project Petit Verdot 2021. Petit Verdot is a variety that just loves Israel. It shows well across the map, from the North to the desert, and is usually a blender, but here is an excellent single-vineyard expression.

It has aromas of ripe plum and blackberries, is full-bodied with leathery notes, layers of complexity, and a long, lingering finish. A beautiful wine, and it represents good value.

FEINSCHMECKERS: NIS 150 +

Tzuba Metzuda 2022. I have recommended a few lighter wines this time.

For those who like full body, richness, and opulence, this is the ticket.

It is basically a Cabernet Sauvignon, fleshed out with Merlot and Syrah, from Tzuba's beautiful high-elevation vineyards in the Judean Hills. It is sturdy, full in the mouth, and it has nice complexity.

Vitkin Grenache Noir, Collector's Edition 2024. A special edition wine with Vitkin Winery's beautiful and stylish new label. This is a favorite of mine.

Crunchy red fruit, mouth-filling flavor but bright and fresh, and with a fruit-driven finish. Excellent summer red, though I am happy to drink it anytime.

Vitkin Winery is the pioneer of Mediterranean varieties and ABC (Anything but Cabernet, Chardonnay) in Israel.

Benhaim Cabernet Franc Reserve 2022. One hundred forty years ago, Rothschild's Lafite advisers told him to plant more Cabernet Franc in the Holy Land than Cabernet Sauvignon.

I love Cab Franc. It is more aromatic than its more famous offspring, with lifted green, herbaceous aromas. This wine is well made in its full-bodied, oaky style.

Bat Shlomo-Assaf Granit, Alef After Dark 2024. A joint venture between world-famous Israeli chef Assaf Granit and Bat Shlomo Vineyards. A Cabernet Sauvignon from the winery's own vineyards.

Medium-bodied, elegant, everything in place, no characteristic (fruit, tan-

nin, acidity, oak) overplayed. Silky drinkability.

As you would expect, a good food wine. It is available in chef Granit's restaurants, at the winery visitors' center, and online at the winery shop.

Hevron Heights Special Reserve 2018. If you want to pay a real compliment to your guests, buy a prestige flagship wine from a leading winery.

This wine was sent to me. It is big, loud, full-bodied, opulent, rich, and oaky – a real mouthful of wine.

It certainly looks the part. Exaggerated heavy bottle, wax closure, and stylish label.

Hebron Heights Winery is from Kiryat Arba. Made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Shiraz. It is also very expensive, but the bottle age works in its favor. It has softened with time. As the label explains, it is from the 2018-5778 vintage!

Wine represents the farmers, growers, winemakers, and the Land of Israel, so put Israel in the center of your table.

Most will choose to celebrate the Jewish New Year with a smile and optimism. Eat well and drink well.

To wine lovers and supporters of Israel, we say: *Shana tova u'metuka*; we wish you a sweet and happy new year! ■

The writer is a wine trade veteran and winery insider turned wine writer, who has advanced Israeli wines over four decades. He is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore.com