



WINE AND the four glasses: As much a part of Passover as the matzah. (Galil Mountain Winery)

THIS YEAR IS DIFFERENT... FROM ALL OTHER YEARS



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

The Passover Wine Festival is a combination of two words gleaned from great wine cultures that flourished alongside our own in the ancient world. One is the Greek word *symposium*, which was nothing more than a glorified wine tasting. The other is the *convivium*, which was the word for a Roman banquet. The Seder night celebrated by Jews worldwide is a combination of the two. We are expected to drink four cups of wine and drink them at a formal meal that developed from the concept of the Roman banquet.

• **The first glass** is the aperitif and the wine for the first blessing. At a proper banquet, the aperitif may be a sparkling wine. For Seder night, some will

choose a kiddush wine, or a light, low alcohol Moscato. Others choose their best wine. Customs vary from family to family. Some are locked into red wines, believing this is the preferred choice for Jewish ritual. Others will only choose white, because red wine reminds one of the blood libel accusations often made historically at this time of year.

• **The second glass** is both for the “starters” in the banquet sense and the first course. I normally choose a white wine for the blessing and then go on to drink it with the fish course. Alternatives can be a light- to medium-bodied red wine or a rose, which are very popular these days.

• **The third glass** is the one I would drink during the meat course and then afterwards, for the third blessing. This for me is the easiest choice: a quality red wine.

• **For the fourth cup**, I would choose a dessert wine. This is the classic way to finish a meal. It goes with the pudding or cake. This may be a Moscato, a dessert wine made from Gewurztraminer or a fortified port style. Others will choose a red wine. All is okay. There are no rules – except the traditions your family follow. Many households simply plonk red, white and kiddush wines on the center of the table, along with the grape juice, and leave each individual to choose their poison.

I HAVE listed recommended wines by price range. Buy where you are most comfortable and within your budget. Be practical. It is not a time you need to impress. You are not going to buy Chateau Lafite for your great aunt who hates wine! The number of guests and their expertise will obviously affect how much

you are prepared to spend. The names I have given for each category is meant to be playful and tongue in cheek. Don’t take them too seriously!

WINE DRINKERS – Up to NIS 50:

• **Golan Sauvignon Blanc 2020:** A new addition to the Golan label, produced by the Golan Heights Winery. Fresh, uncomplicated, crisp. Great value.

• **Jerusalem Wineries Vintage Chardonnay 2020:** A nicely balanced Chardonnay, in the modern style. Refreshing. They have an innovative visitors’ center at the windmill in Mishkenot Sha’ananim.

• **Carmel Selected French Gewurztraminer 2020:** Semi dry blend made from Colombard (aka French Colombard) and Gewurztraminer. Nicely aromatic, with the sweetness liked by many.



(LEFT TO right) Parfum de Binyamina; Jerusalem Vintage Chardonnay; Tulip Net Sauvignon Blanc; Bravdo Cabernet Sauvignon; 1848 Winery 7th Generation Petite Sirah; Darom White; Recanati Special Reserve.

(Binyamina Winery; Jerusalem Wineries; Tulip Winery; Bravdo Winery; 1848 Winery; Yatir Winery; Recanati Winery)

- **Barkan Reserve Gold Edition Rose 2020:** Easy drinking rose. Slightly fuller color than some, but very fruity. The Barkan Gold range are very big sellers.

- **Derech Eretz Merlot 2019:** A very simple wine. Fruity, good value, unsophisticated, and ideal for the big party Seder.

- **Zion Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2019:** A lot of wine at NIS 33! Great value from the rejuvenated Zion Winery.

WINE LOVERS – NIS 50 to NIS 100

- **Jezreel Valley Dabouki Pet-Nat 2019:** Naturally sparkling, fun, yeasty and unpretentious. Dabouki is a local grape variety often used in the past for distillation. This is a well-made example of a style known as hipster's Champagne or sparkling wine for beer drinkers! An innovative possibility for the first glass!

- **La Foret Blanche Talpiot Blanc 2020:** Nice effort. A blend of Roussanne and Chenin Blanc. Fresh, herbal with grassy notes. These two grape varieties are on the up here. La Foret Blanche is a new winery that launched with unlucky timing, just before COVID struck.

- **Darom White 2020:** A new release and lesser expensive label produced by Yatir Winery. The wine is a Sauvignon Blanc from Ramat Arad and Mitzpe Ramon vineyards. The Negev is a good region for whites. The wine is fragrant and refreshing.

- **La Vie Blanc du Castel 2020:** A charming white wine made from Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. It is a good value offering from one of our very finest wineries, Domaine du Castel. The wine has an aroma of tropical fruit and a citrusy finish.

- **Bat Shlomo Sauvignon Blanc 2020:** Sauvignon Blanc is a variety I think we make better than Chardonnay. This is a great example from Bat Shlomo. Aromatic, minerally and flinty. A great wine with either meze or grilled fish. I also love the glass stopper... useful to keep when the bottle is finished.

- **Parfum de Binyamina 2020:** New

quality dry rose. Delicate in color and aroma. Nice presentation. It would make a nice gift. The name of the wine has its roots in history. Binyamina Winery was founded in a perfume factory founded by James Rothschild.

- **Neta Rose 2020:** A fun semi dry rose with berry fruit and a touch of delicate sweetness. Refreshing. The winery was founded in 2018 by long-term agriculturists and vine growers.

- **Galil Cabernet Sauvignon 2018:** I am endlessly confused by the labels of Galil Mountain. This is the launch of a new series, with a pretty label. The wine is soft, fruity and easy drinking. Good value within its price range.

- **Segal Merlot Free Run 2018:** One of my favorite value wines from Segal, made by Master of Wine Ido Lewinsohn. It shows good fruit, a full flavor in the mouth, yet also has a refreshing finish. Moorish.

- **Dalton Alma Red:** Dalton is another winery that changes packaging with bewildering speed. This is a Mediterranean blend of Shiraz, Grenache and Carignan, under a new label. It is spicy, meaty, even chewy. A nice mouthful of wine. These southern Rhone style blends are well made in Israel.

- **Drimia Sahar 2017:** Drimia Winery is an unsung winery making wine from a beautiful vineyard at Sussiya, at 800 meters elevation. The wine represents both good quality and good value. A blend of Cab and Merlot, with a touch of Israel's adopted variety, Carignan.

CONNOISSEURS (NIS 100-150)

- **Tulip Net Sauvignon Blanc 2019:** One of my favorite Sauvignon Blanc varietals. Aromatic, steely acidity and beautifully fresh. Great job by Tulip Winery.

- **Tura Merlot 2017:** This is one of my favorite Merlots in a country where few Merlots really shine. Tura, however, always delivers. It is full-bodied, quite complex with good fruit and staying power through to the finish.

- **Bravdo Cabernet Sauvignon 2018:** The winery of two professors. It comes from the Judean Foothills and is a rare, genuine estate winery. I found this wine quite full-bodied and New World in style, though it is well made in its genre.

- **1848 Winery Petite Sirah Single Vineyard 2017:** This is a monster from Ramat Sirin vineyard. Full-bodied. Attractive violets on the nose, earthy flavors with a powerful follow through. Big style... bursting with flavor. Get the steak on the grill!

- **Nana Cassiopeia 2018:** From the wonderful vineyards in Mitzpe Ramon. I get the chills whenever I see them. I must admit, up to now, I have preferred their whites. This is a full-bodied, slightly funky, characterful wine produced mainly from Syrah.

FEINSCHMECKERS (NIS 150+)

- **Chateau Golan Eliad 2017:** Mainly Cab this time, and reasonably classic. Black currant fruit, good structure, nice length. A wine to take time over.

- **Recanati Special Reserve 2017:** A very Israeli-style wine made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Marselan, Petite Sirah and Carignan. Deep black fruit in aroma and flavor with an oaky backdrop. It is full-bodied with a lingering finish.

- **Teperberg Legacy Cabernet Franc 2016:** Beautiful wine in a very ostentatious, over-the-top bottle. Good typicity, nice fruit, lifted aromas, full bodied, with a mild herbaceous character, and a satisfying and well balanced finish.

- **Shiloh Mosaic 2017:** A gold medal and 95 points in the Decanter World Wine Awards, and recommended by *Decanter Magazine*. It does not get better than that! A Bordeaux style blend, but led by Merlot for a change. The wine is intense, with layers of complexity and silky tannins. It has a beautiful long finish.

LIKE EVERYONE, I was brought up believing that the Carmel Tirosh grape juice is the best quality and purest on the



PUT A good vintage on your festival table – in this instance, a Yarden. (Golan Heights Winery)

market. I still believe it is the Rolls Royce of Israeli grape juices. They have brought out some new variations this year. There is now also a rose, and a new red and white sparkling grape juice. These are worth a try. I think the children will like them.

It has been a tough year for those in the wine trade, along with everyone else. Every year I think we should drink blue and white at Passover. However this year in particular, I ask everyone to support our grape growers, vineyard owners, wineries and retailers by choosing Israeli wines. It has been a year in which those that depend on the restaurant business, or on selling at the cellar door at the winery, have found their business decimated. Tanks and warehouses are overflowing with wine. Give a hand and contribute in the way you can. It is a mitzvah to support your own and buy Israeli wine. This year is different from all other years! ■

The writer is a wine trade veteran who has advanced Israeli wine for 35 years. He is referred to as 'the English voice of Israeli wine.' www.adammontefiore.com