



(Miriam Alster/Flash90)



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**P**assover is again upon us. It is for me the ultimate wine festival, cementing the connection between Judaism, the Jewish people and the fruit of the vine.

The Seder (Passover) Night is set up like a Roman banquet. Wine can be matched to courses and the Four Cups are an excuse to drink a full range of wines.

The classic order of things is sparkling wine as an aperitif, or the first glass. The second glass can be a white wine, the third a red wine and the fourth, a dessert wine. Those who through tradition demand red wines, may use rose or a light red to bring in needed variety. Every family has their personal customs. These may include a Kiddush wine or their best red wine for the first glass. Others will save the best wine for the fourth glass. As far as I am concerned, all is kosher and whatever is decided is okay. There is no right or wrong.

What is key is that everyone has the opportunity to drink something they like. Not everyone likes regular wines, which they may find sour or astringent. So, I never have a problem tailoring my wine choice to the lowest common denominator. I always have grape juice available,

and usually a Moscato. My choice of grape juice is usually **Carmel Tirosh**. To me Moscato is the ultimate Jewish wine. Sweet, frizzante, low alcohol and tasty. It is a bridge between Kiddush wine, grape juice and regular table wine. It is a useful option to have up your sleeve, to make sure everyone is catered for. Golan Heights Winery's Hermon Moscato is in my view the best Israeli version.

**Bartenura Moscato** is the authentic choice from the home of Moscato in Italy, the Asti region of Piedmont. Though it is a big brand, the quality is certainly there. For those wedded to the color red, there are also red and rose Moscatos. If you want red, Zion Winery's expression of **Red Moscato** is as good as any. Hayotzer also produces a **Rose Moscato**. Personally, I always prefer to have a Moscato and grape juice handy instead of a Kiddush wine.

For many years, our family Seders were small, intimate affairs. With no less than three people in the wine trade in our midst, we used Passover as an excuse to do something special with wine. My children used to ask a few months before: "Well, what are we going to taste at Passover this year." We carefully chose a wine theme every year and drank some pretty special wines. That is a luxury for a small family only. Now, our Seders tend to be larger. The family has grown and combined with others.

So as a result, our wine selection is less pretentious, but you can still drink well at every price point. There should certainly be no pressure to buy up or drink better to impress. If ever there was a time to drink what you enjoy, this is it.

I do believe it is a mitzvah to drink Israeli wine. Support the wine growers in the Land of Israel when you can.

They need and deserve your support, but I include imported wines in my recommendations because some do look for wine from elsewhere. I also usually choose kosher wine out of respect for the guests. If there is one person for whom this is important, then it is a worthwhile decision. There is certainly no lack of choice.

(Photos: Wineries mentioned)





However at the same time, many very good Israeli wines are not kosher, for example **Clos de Gat** and **Margalit**. It is important to realize these are usually made by Jews, and none of them idol worshippers. I don't want to overturn any apple carts. Just saying... Anyway before alarm bells ring, I can reassure you that nearly all my recommendations are kosher!

#### WINE DRINKERS – UNDER NIS 50

**Barkan Gewurztraminer Gold Edition 2021.** A semi dry option for those wanting a touch of sweetness. Gewurz is the most aromatic and recognizable variety. Barkan is our largest winery, offering value at inexpensive prices.

**Recanati Yonatan White 2021.** A very drinkable, fragrant blend of Colombard and Chardonnay. I like Colombard in Israel. It gives good results, has a flowery aroma and as great natural acidity. Recanati Winery is shortly to move to a new winery in the Upper Galilee in time for the 2022 harvest.

**Teperberg Impression Rose 2021.** Made from Barbera and Grenache NIS 40, this is a simple but beautifully refreshing rose, with the most delicate pink color. Teperberg is now the third largest winery in the country. They are finally building an eagerly awaited visitors center.

**Carmel Selected Cabernet Sauvignon 2021.** This is a light, fresh Cab, but full of flavor. Easy drinking, yet vibrant. Carmel is the historic winery of Israel and Selected is almost our oldest brand. It first appeared in the early 1970s.

#### WINE LOVERS NIS 50–NIS 100

**Primo V Prosecco Rose.** There are Israeli sparkling wines, but this is a kosher Prosecco and it is a little softer, so maybe suitable for Passover. Prosecco, which has conquered the world, is

reasonably new in Israel. It is delicate, light and fruity.

**Galil Mountain Aviv White 2021.** A delightfully pleasing white wine made from Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier. It is aromatic and refreshing, with a clean finish and is made mainly for restaurants. Great aperitif or first glass. Galil Mountain is one of our leaders in sustainability, providing a good example to the industry.

**Binyamina Tsukim Roussanne Marsanne 2021.** A classic Rhone blend of white varieties. I liked this expression. It has herbal notes, a good mouth feel, some interesting complexity and a refreshing finish. Binyamina is one of our veteran wineries, celebrating its 70th anniversary this year.

**Tulip White Franc 2021.** A white wine made from a blend of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, with a kiss of the red grapes providing the blush color. The wine is always popular. A safe banker. Tulip Winery is one of our innovative winemaking wineries that in addition, nobly assists adults with special needs. (NIS 79)

**Tabor Eco Rose 2021.** A very pale pink, this rose is made from Barbera. The Eco label celebrates Tabor Winery's focus on ecological vineyards, which is basically returning nature to the vineyard. Fresh, mineral and perfect with meze. (NIS 85)

**Dalton Petite Sirah Estate 2020.** I love Petite Sirah in Israel, but it normally represents power and body rather than elegance. This is one of my favorite expressions of the variety, also known as Durif. It is full of flavor, chewy fruit and brimming with character. Dalton Winery, pioneer of the Galilee, is making some pretty good wines these days.

**Netofa Domaine 2019.** An Israeli GSM, the initials that stand for Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre. I would like to drink this as a lunchtime wine.

It has good fruit, but is not too blowsy, is refreshing and demands another sip. Netofa is a specialist in Mediterranean style reds.

**Ephod Hila 2019.** Well balanced, medium-bodied blend of Malbec, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon presented by Ephod Winery. Frenchman David Suisa, with experience making high level kosher wines in Bordeaux, has founded this winery in Israel.

**Herzog Lineage Cabernet Sauvignon 2019.** A beautiful underrated Cab. Classic blackcurrant nose, good structure and persistent follow through. This is made by the Herzog family in California, who have done so much to advance the quality of kosher wines worldwide. This would be an excellent buy.

#### CONNOISSEURS NIS 100–150

**Drimia Cabernet Sauvignon 2020.** This wine is grown in the southern Hebron Hills at Sussya, 800 meters above sea level. It is a winery I admire for its modesty, pursuit of quality and authenticity. This is a fine Cab. flavor, and the ripe black fruit is on the nose and follows all the way through to the finish.

**Touch By Fusion Syrah Grenache 2017.** An negociant blend made in Languedoc, France by Doron Itzaky. He makes wine in different countries. This is a full meaty blend of Syrah and Grenache, with full flavor and nice complexity.

**Shiloh Petite Sirah 2018.** I make no apology for having two varietal Petite Sirahs amongst my recommendations. I think it is a variety that shows well here. This is another bold expression. Deep fruit flavors, hints of violets on the nose, with a broad earthy flavor. Nice wine.

**Psagot Homeland 2020.** A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Petit Verdot and Petite Sirah. This is a fruit forward wine with well integrated com-

plexity. It is a newly launched wine and I liked it, but I am not surprised, I greatly respect their winemaker, Canadian Sam Soroka.

**Zion Old City Port Style 2018.** Old City is a new label of dessert wines produced by Zion Winery, which was founded in 1848 in the Old City of Jerusalem. This is a rich fortified wine, made in the style of Port. The wine was left to mature in barrels in the winery yard in all weathers. I just think this might be a good sweet ending to your Seder as the fourth glass.

#### FEINSHMECKERS NIS 150+

**Razi'el Red 2019.** Elegant, focused Syrah Carignan blend, with real finesse. Razi'el is owned by the Ben-Zaken family of Castel fame and it is situated at the family home, where Castel was founded. It is a wine of the highest quality, but give it time to express itself.

**Tura Mountain Peak 2017.** This is the flagship wine of Tura Winery. Big, full bodied Bordeaux style blend with ripe fruit, good structure and lingering finish. Tura is from the Central Mountains region. Their wines are consistently good.

**Vitkin Shorashim 2016.** This is for one of those small family Seders, when you want something special. It is a unique blend of Carignan, Petite Sirah, Petit Verdot and Colombard. The wine is rich, full bodied, with ripe fruit, a firm spine of tannin, with hints of mocha and vanilla with a little dirt to make it interesting. Vitkin Winery excels at less fashionable grape varieties, like Carignan and Petite Sirah.

All that remains for me is to say Happy Passover, be happy and drink well. ■

*The writer is a wine industry 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](http://www.adammontefiore.com)*

