

# THINK WHITE... AND PINK

BARKAN OFFERINGS for your Shavuot. (Photos: Wineries mentioned)



• ADAM S. MONTEFIORE

In the early nineties we were a country that mainly drank white wines. Emerald Riesling was the largest selling wine, Carmel Selected Emerald Riesling was the biggest brand, and Fantasia was popular in the way that Lambrusco and Moscato are today.

Then the red wine revolution started. It was first published that red wine has health benefits. New wine lovers mistakenly understood they would be considered bigger experts if they drank only red wines. Furthermore, Israeli wineries learned to make red wines like whites: refreshing, fruity, not astringent, and with good acidity. Israel became a red wine drinking country. This move was fanned by the success of Israeli red wines in the court of international opinion. It was red wines that won most awards, not whites.

In the past decade, white wines are thankfully coming back. Firstly, there has been a vast improvement in the way whites are made. The improvement is across the industry. However, what is more important is that wine drinkers are voting with their palate. This is more apparent in restaurants, but that is where new trends begin.

I have to say the new white wine drinkers are right. These wines match far better with our hot, humid climate. Who wants to drink a big, high-alcohol, fruit bomb red during the next *hamsin*? It may be a great wine, full of flavor and complexity, but can you manage another sip, let alone another glass? If it does not refresh, it does not compel you to drink more. Fur-

thermore, whites go so much better with our Eastern Mediterranean, Levantine, Israeli fusion cuisine.

Fortunately, we have our own white wine festival. This is Shavuot, aka the Feast of Weeks, a Harvest Festival and the Day of the First Fruits. On this day, we celebrate by eating dairy products. This swiftly arrives to cheese (how much quiche can you eat?), and it is a mere *shluk* from there to “cheese and wine.” Contrary to the prevailing image, in actual fact, white wines go with a far greater range of cheeses than red wines.

As rose wines are closer to white wines in terms of their refreshing nature and acidity, and they add a pretty color, they also gate-crash the white wine party. So, as far as we wine drinkers are concerned, the White Festival has become the White and Pink Festival.

Here are some recommendations.

**Golan Rose 2021.** Forgotten label of the Golan Heights Winery, but this is a delicious, unpretentious, great-value wine. Pink, crisp, refreshing. I can’t ask for more from a rose. NIS 40

**Salentein Portillo Malbec Rose, Argentina 2020.** The label describes the wine as “designed to drink in good company” and then recommends it be paired with pizza, fish, pasta and salad. Well, it is Shavuot, so we can add cheese and quiche! Slightly deeper colored than some of the other roses recommended, with a mild aroma of sour cherry and a touch of strawberry, it hits the mark – and certainly at this price point. Nonkosher. NIS 50

**Vidigal, Porta 6 Vinho Verde, Portugal 2020.** This winery has super-drinkable, easy-drinking wines, from indigenous varieties from Portugal. The fun label makes the wine attractive on the shelves. This

wine is a Vinho Verde and classic: light, aromatic and refreshing. I am a great fan of Portuguese wine. Nonkosher. NIS 46

**Maybach Sauvignon Blanc, Germany 2019.** This has some of the aroma of Sauvignon Blanc with some sweetness. In the words of Daniel Rogov, master cynic and wit: “People who like this will like it very much.” He was right; some of the people I shared it with did like it. Good option for the semi dry, semi sweet crowd. Nonkosher. NIS 50

**Carmel Appellation Pinot Grigio 2019.** A citrusy, lemony nose is backed by good acidity. They call it Pinot Grigio like the Italians, but do not be confused, it is the same grape variety as Pinot Gris, already released elsewhere. However, it is a nice wine. Carmel is the historic winery of Israel, soon to go public with its new tie-up with Clal Beverages and the soft drinks company Jafora-Tabori. NIS 60

**1848 Winery Chardonnay, 2nd Generation 2021.** I drank this at a lunch recently. It was so tasty, we simply finished the bottle without noticing. It is a modern Chardonnay, fresh, green apple, comfortable acidity with a long finish. 1848 Winery is making some very good wines these days, and their 2nd Generation label is particularly good value. NIS 60

**Bartenura Pinot Grigio 2021, Italy.** An authentic Italian Pinot Grigio. It exhibits a pleasant pear and peach aroma, with a fruity flavor and a well-balanced finish. Bartenura is mainly known for its Moscato, which is sweet. This is dry and extremely drinkable. NIS 65

**Yatir, Darom by Yatir White 2021.** An elegant and refreshing wine made from Sauvignon Blanc in





(FROM L) 1848 Generation 2 Chardonnay; Carmel Pinot Grigio (Ayal Keren); Zion Old City Port Style; Bartenura Pinot Grigio; Darom White (Ayal Keren); Golan Rose; Yiron Sauvignon Blanc (Hagit Goren); Barkan Beta Orange Wine; Saint Beatrice Rose; Porto 6 Vinho Verde.

the desert regions of Israel, from the Ramat Arad and Mitzpe Ramon regions. This is a return of Yatir Winery to Sauvignon Blanc, which they used to produce a few years ago. NIS 75

**Teperberg Essence Rose 2021.** A blend of Grenache, Mourvedre and a little Barbera. A very pale rose, and very delicate fruit, balanced by a fresh acidity. Teperberg is the largest family-owned winery in Israel. It was founded in 1870 in the Old City of Jerusalem. NIS 80

**Recanati French Blend 2021.** A semi dry blend of Colombard with a little Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat. This is for those searching for a sweetness in their wines. It is nicely aromatic and flavorful and refreshing. It is called French, because for some unexplained reason, the dominant grape variety is named here “French” Colombard. NIS 80

**Chateau Roubine Sainte Beatrice, France 2020.** Classic rose made from Cinsault, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Pale-colored with notes of wild strawberry, bone dry, mineral with cleansing acidity, from Provence, where rose accounts for most of the production. This property produces organic, biodynamic wines... and this expression is kosher. NIS 75

**Barkan Beta Orange Wine 2021.** If this is your first orange wine, it is a good place to start. Orange wine is a wine made with the grape skins, in the manner of a red wine. Many are funky, tannic and an acquired taste for wine geeks. This one is made with great finesse from Roussanne and the indigenous Holy Land varieties, Marawi and Jandali. It is floral, herbal with notes of apricot and peach and is quite moreish. NIS 90

**La Vie, Blanc du Castel 2021.** La Vie is appropriately described by wine writer Itay Gleitman as Castel in jeans! This is the entry-level white from one of our very finest wineries, Domaine du Castel. It is made mainly from Sauvignon Blanc and is fragrant, crisp, and exhibits easy complexity. NIS 80

**Drimia Rose 2021.** A fine rose from Sussiya, not far from Yatir, at 800 meters above sea level. I always

think the reds of Drimia punch above their weight and this is its first rose. It is a blend of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon, with a floral aroma and fresh flavors. A good rose. NIS 90

**Galil Mountain Yiron Sauvignon Blanc 2021.** A new release under Yiron, the flagship label of Galil Mountain from the Upper Galilee. The wine comes from a vineyard using compost from disused Nespresso capsules. It is an example of what makes the winery one of the leaders promoting sustainability in the country. As for the wine, it is aromatic, flavorful with good acidity. Sometimes I think we make Sauvignon Blanc better than Chardonnay here. NIS 102

**Snow Ridge Vidal Icewine 2020, Canada.** I was just wondering what to choose as a dessert wine, when this was delivered all the way from Niagra in Canada. It is a genuine Icewine, with the grapes very late harvested when frozen on the vine. It is luscious with a hint of citrus, tropical fruit, floral notes all doused in an all-encompassing blanket of honeysuckle. Despite being incredibly sweet, it is almost refreshing. Serve it very cold from the freezer...just don't forget it there. This is a sister brand to Tzafona Cellars, and it is Tzafona that is here. Vidal is a hybrid grape, which performs well in cold climates. Usually in 375 ml. half bottles... remember that when you check the price.

**Zion Old City Port Style 2018.** A rich Port-style fortified dessert wine, matured in the yard for 21 months, in the Judean Desert, by Israel's oldest winery. Zion Winery was founded in 1848 in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The wine is made from Marselan, which is proving to be such a good variety here. The idea of Port and Stilton is embedded in my British upbringing. This is not a genuine Port from the Douro, and you may not have Stilton available, but it is a good Israeli Port-style wine to accompany those blue cheeses. NIS 129

Moscato may always be included, as far as I am

concerned. It is important to look after all interests, including those who don't like regular dry wines. Choose these from any of the wineries founded in the 19th century like Carmel, Hayotzer, Teperberg or Zion.

A MINI guide to cheese and wine pairing for Shavuot: The cheese world is a lot more complicated than the wine world. There are so many options and combinations. However, to generalize: Sauvignon Blanc is classic with goat's cheese, Chardonnay goes with brie or Camembert, red wines with cheddar or aged cheeses, and dessert wines are classic with blue cheeses. To extend this guide, Chardonnay goes with quiche, a sweet Muscat with cheesecake.

You are covered! However, don't take it too seriously. Drink what you like, with what you like. It really does not matter. I drink the wine I want with the food I like, and no one throws their arms up in horror that I have not followed the “rules.” Ask everyone to bring a cheese or wine. Cut up some vegetables. Supply baguette or crackers with some grapes and walnuts for a tasty decoration, add chutney or pickle. Hey presto! You have a cheese and wine party.

On the other hand, if you want to, you can have fun by turning a party into a tasting. Buy five different cheeses and three different wines. The cheeses could be soft, creamy or salty, throw in a goat's cheese, an aged hard cheese and a blue cheese. The wines could be a dry or semi dry white wine, a red wine and a sweet wine, for example. With each cheese, taste the three wines, discuss it, and decide which goes better and why.

Most important is to join in with the new appreciation of white and rose wines. You will not regret it. They will be good friends of yours throughout the summer months.

*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)*