

# FIFTY SHADES OF PINK



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

**H**ow to prepare a Shavuot party? Invite some friends to each bring a wine, and others to bring a cheese. With three different wine styles (dry white, semi dry white and a rosé or red) and a cheese board of five different cheeses of different types (for instance hard, soft, aged, and blue cheeses, split between those made from cow, goat and sheep's milk.) Decorate the cheese board with chopped or sliced vegetables, sprinkle some nuts on it, add the odd bunch of grapes (serve them from the freezer!) and a tablespoon of chutney or pickle. Have crackers or freshly baked baguettes available and you have a party. Simple and easy to arrange.

A fun game is to taste the three wines one by one, each time with a sliver of a different cheese. Then you can form your own opinion of which wine style is the best partner for each cheese.

It's also possible to turn a party into an innovative wine-tasting at home. You don't need a reason, but it helps. It could be a birthday, an anniversary, a gathering of old friends, but also a festival like Shavuot!

You need a wine glass for each of the people you invite. This is no big investment these days.

You can make the tasting professional, educational and formal, or fun and informal. Why not invite a wine educator to give a tutored tasting? This would be for a professional tasting. If you have eight couples, you need only open one bottle of each wine. The costs of both the wine and educator together, will be reasonable divided amongst 16 people.

For a formal tasting, without a professional, you need a table place setting for all the participants, with a sheet of white paper instead of a place mat, to assist with judging the depth of color of the wine. An A4 sheet borrowed from your printer will suffice.

There should be a receptacle for pouring away excess wine in the center of the table. This could be an empty ice bucket, water jug or a cooking pot, whatever you have. You are likely to need more than one of these.

You can also give each guest a plastic cup so they can spit privately, before emptying their slops into what is being used as a spittoon. There should be a glass for water for everyone, and either grissini or a baguette in the center of the table.

Wines should be placed in an order from white to red, dry to sweet, young to old, and then covered in silver paper to be tasted blind.

You can download a basic tasting sheet on which the tasters can score the wine based on color, aroma, taste, harmony and conclusion. After each wine and a sniff, slurp and swallow, there is a discussion before the wine

ROSÉS ARE mood wines: Drink up!  
(Liron Gazit)



(Photos: Courtesy, Grenache – Binyamina Grenache Rose; Essence Rose – Teperberg Essence Rose)

is revealed and before going to the next one. Maybe the person who brought the particular wine can then explain what it is.

Or you can make the tasting more informal and fun. Wines may be left uncovered, for people to taste when they want. No need to sit at the table. Seating can be in a circle or on the patio, or wherever conversations between small groups take place. Discussions may be based on a level of “like” or “dislike.”

I HAVE my own method. We invariably open a number of wines. At the end of the evening, the best wine will invariably be the emptiest bottle, and the fullest bottle will be the least popular. This method does not need scores or opinions, but funnily enough, it rarely fails to show the accurate picture!

As for which wines to choose, you can set a subject for the tasting. The criteria may be based on a single grape variety, a specific vintage year, a region or country, or even you may specify the price range. You can ask guests to bring “anything but Cabernet and Chardonnay.”

You simply theme the tasting by asking people to bring a bottle according to your instructions. Or you can leave it open, asking guests just to bring a bottle and see what turns up.

Many of us save bottles forever, waiting for that special occasion that never comes. When we finally open it, the wine is more suitable to put on the salad, as wine vinegar. So, the call may be “bring that special bottle that you have been saving for a rainy day.” For a tasting, six bottles are plenty.

More professional tastings may include vertical or horizontal tastings. To taste Yarden Cabernet Sauvignon from a number of different vintages would be a vertical tasting. A horizontal tasting would be to take one particular wine, like a Merlot, from five or six different wineries, but from one particular vintage. Whatever the choice of tasting, afterward you simply put the food on the table and the evening continues as though it is a regular party.

For Shavuot, you have your ready-made subject. It is cheese and wine. White is very much the color of Shavuot. White clothes, a white night of study, white cheesecake and white wines. However, this year, the white is very much tinted with pink, as more and more wineries are producing rosés.

A rosé has the benefit of a beautiful color, a berry aroma associated with red wines, and a freshness and acidity more common in white wines. These rosés range from what almost seems like a white wine with

a tinge of pink, to others that seems like a light red wine. Some are bone dry and austere; others are semi-dry, even semi-sweet.

There are those with a mineral backbone, while others have tutti-fruity aromas. The range is wide, but they are suitable for Shavuot, accompanying cheese well. Many different grape varieties are used, but these are less important or significant in rosés.

The variety does not make an imprint on the wine in the same way as red and white wines. Rosés are mood wines. These are not wines to taste slowly through an evening, discussing nuances and development in the glass. They are drinking wines. For me, this style of symbolizes the Eastern Mediterranean more than any other wine.

#### Some recommendations:

- Binyamina Grenache Rosé 2019. A very deep colored rosé, colored like a red wine diluted with a glass of water. It is made from Grenache, recalling Carmel’s Grenache Rosé, one of Israel’s largest selling wines many years ago. The grandparents will have grown up with that. The wine comes in a long thin Riesling style bottle. It is fruity and semi-dry, providing the perfect answer to those seeking some sweetness. Good value. NIS 33

- Dalton Alma Coral 2019. This is the palest of pale rosés. What the French would call Gris de Gris. Pale onion skin color, with a fragrant nose and great acidity. Innovatively made from Grenache and Pinot Gris grapes, part fermented in oak barrels and then barrel-aged. This is a winemaker who loves to play outside the box. Dalton’s wines are increasingly interesting as a result. NIS 75

- Tura Rosé 2019. Tura Winery produces wine in the Central Mountains region. Their wines rarely disappoint. This is a super drinking rosé. Very lively with a tutti-fruity aroma, a touch of fresh strawberry and an oh-so-delicate sweetness. Recommended. A great drinking wine. NIS 75

- La Foret Blanche Talpiot Rosé 2019. This is a new innovative winery founded this year, of all years. So they merit support. The name refers the Yatir Forest under snow. This is a winery with French undertones, and the French are good with rosés. This a blend of Merlot and Syrah, with aromas of red berries and wildflowers. It is balanced and clean. NIS 65.

- Bravdo Rosé 2019. For a change, made from Merlot. Pale rosé made from one of the very few genuine estate wineries in Israel. They are situated at Karmei Yosef in the Judean Foothills. The wine has aromas of

young cherries and is refreshing. NIS 79

- Recanati Rosé, Manara Vineyard 2019. Recanati Winery was one of the first to make a high-quality rosé, with a beautiful eye-catching presentation. It is simply elegant, refreshing with a delicate aroma of strawberries, cut with a great acidity. A great gift to take to a party. NIS 69

- 1848, 2nd Generation Rosé 2019. A clean, good value rosé with a beautiful salmon-pink color, delicate berry aroma and a vibrant, crisp finish. 1848 Winery was founded by the eighth generation of the Shor family, who founded their family winery in 1848 in the Old City of Jerusalem. NIS 60

- Teperberg Essence Rosé 2019. A rosé can also be a blend. This is made from Grenache, Mourvedre and Barbera. It is very pale in color. The wine has a fine strawberry nose, with a soft fresh finish. Teperberg, the largest family winery in Israel, is arguably the most improved winery in the last decade. NIS 75

- Yarden Rosé 2019. A crisp, delicate, refined rosé. One of the many new premium rosés being launched on the market. It is not Yarden’s first rosé. I remember the beautifully named White Harvest from the late 1980’s. This is uniquely made from the Portuguese variety Tinto Cao. The Golan Heights Winery has always been a pioneer in Israel, so it is appropriate that they have a quality rosé in their Yarden portfolio. NIS 89

- Galil Mountain Yiron Rosé 2019. Galil Mountain has produced a rosé under the label of the flagship wine, Yiron. It is made from Grenache, Syrah and Viognier. The wine itself is fresh, fragrant, nicely balanced and very drinkable. The real question is whether it justifies its price. NIS 102

- Rosé du Castel 2019. It was a great statement about the new status of rosé when Domaine du Castel launched their expression. This one is lighter colored than usual and it has a beautiful pink color. The wine is a classic rosé, with a delicate berry aroma, a mineral quality in the mouth and cleansing acidity on the finish. Castel remains one of Israel’s very finest wineries. NIS 94

Baron Philippe de Rothschild was once asked what his favorite wine was. He said, “The sea was calm, the sun was shining and the girl was beautiful. I can’t remember the wine, but it was the best wine I ever tasted.” He may well have been drinking rosé!

*The writer is a wine trade veteran who has advanced Israeli wine for over 30 years. He is referred to as ‘the English voice of Israeli wine.’ [www.adammontefiore.com](http://www.adammontefiore.com)*