



WINE FOR HOME DRINKING



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

Coronavirus has disrupted our lives, destroyed our businesses and challenged our way of life in a way that wars, terrorism and suicide bombings failed to do. It has taken away the simple pleasures like going to a restaurant for a meal, going to a bar for a Campari or a coffee shop for a cappuccino. It has not, though, taken away our ability to open a bottle of wine and bring a bit of civilized culture into our home.

Wine is not like spirits or beer. One does not binge drink with wine. It is normally sipped with a meal. It is not about escapism, but enjoying a cultural moment, as old as civilization itself. One benefit of the current situation is that wine has suddenly become accessible at home. Many wineries have introduced Internet sales. Wine stores and supermarkets have also upped their game with home deliveries. Many

are offering great deals.

Wine at home is a relaxant and a statement that you will continue to enjoy yourself come what may. Remember, you do not have to drink a whole bottle. Take the couple of glasses you want. If you don't have a fancy wine saver or preserver, it is OK. Put the cork back in the bottle. If it does not go in, turn it around, it will be easier. Then put your bottle, red or white, in your domestic fridge. It will last for a good few days.

Passover is also coming. This is our own wine festival. We survived Pharaoh and have always maintained the mitzvah of Four Cups of wine. Don't let a mere virus get in the way. So, for home enjoyment or for Seder night, I recommend a range of wines. Most are kosher, a few are non-kosher (NK) and not all are Israeli. However, if there was a time to drink blue and white, this is it!

1. 1848 Winery, 2nd Generation Chardonnay 2019

I love this Chardonnay. Elegant, steely and refreshing. A great food wine. The Shor family have been making wine since 1848. The eighth generation is now making quality wines of excellent value. NIS 60



(Photos: Courtesy)

2. Binyamina Orange Roussanne 2018.

This is a new fashion, but a wine style as old as time. It is made with its skins like a red wine. It is an acquired taste for some, but well worth trying out of curiosity. It is not "sour" like a dry white wine, or astringent like a red wine. So, you don't have to be a wine-lover to like it. It is a good example of the genre, with aromas of apricot and citrus, soft tannins and broad, complex flavors. NIS 60

3. Matua Sauvignon Blanc 2018 (NK).

New Zealand is home of the most flavorful, aromatic Sauvignon Blancs. This one from Matua Winery ticks all the boxes. Aromatic with tropical notes, flavorful with great acidity, it is really good value. They also have an excellent Pinot Noir. NIS 69

4. White Tulip 2019

Tulip Winery is one of Israel's finest and most innovative small wineries. They specialize in unusual blends. This is made from Sauvignon Blanc and Gewurztraminer. It has plenty of tropical fruit, with underlying citrus and grapefruit notes. It is always a favorite of mine. NIS 75

5. Agyros Atlantis 2018 (NK)

I think I was one of the first here to talk up Greek wines, long ago. Now the importers are up to speed and I am delighted to have the opportunity to recommend Greek wines available in Israel. Agyros is arguably the leading winery from the volcanic island of Santorini. This wine is mainly made from the Assyrtiko variety. It is light, fresh, fragrant, crisp and mineral. The perfect accompaniment for a whole grilled fish, simply drizzled with olive oil with lemon juice and a few fresh herbs. NIS 90

6. Recanati French Blend 2019

A semi-dry wine made mainly from Colombard, balanced with a little Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat. The wine has a grapey and flowery aroma, and a gentle sweetness. Colombard is an unsung variety, but it grows well in Israel and has good natural acidity. Here, it is known as French Colombard, hence the



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(Ayal Keren)



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name of this wine. It is one of the better semi-dry wines out there. NIS 75

7. Tura Rosé 2019

Tura Winery produces wine in the central mountains region of Israel. Their wines rarely disappoint. This is a super rosé. Very lively with a tutti-fruity aroma, a touch of fresh strawberry and a oh-so-delicate sweetness. Recommended. A great drinking wine. NIS 84

8. Rosé du Castel 2019

Lighter colored than usual, 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. Domaine du Castel remains one of Israel's very finest wineries. NIS 94

9. Teperberg Inspire Devotage 2018

Teperberg Winery really succeeded in reinventing themselves in the last decade. This is also their 150th anniversary, as the winery was founded in 1870. It is now Israel's largest family winery. They use a series of make-up names, like Devotage, which is certainly original but confusing and difficult to follow. However, the wine (Malbec and Marselan) itself is full-bodied, deep-colored with lashings of black fruit, a sweet backdrop of vanilla and a mouth-filling flavor. NIS 60

10. Domaine Netofa Red 2018

Netofa is a winery that specializes in Mediterranean blends. This is a blend of Syrah, Mourvedre and Grenache. It has restrained fruit, not in your face, an attractive chewy flavor and a fresh finish. NIS 60

11. Segal Free Run Cabernet Sauvignon 2018

This is an elegant, fruity Cabernet made from free-run juice, by Segal, part of the Barkan group. It has a lively freshness about it and the good fruit continues through to the finish. NIS 65

12. Kishor GSM 2017

Kishor Winery is a heartwarming estate winery producing underrated, elegant wines of fine quality. The

winery is part of a community for adults with special needs. GSM refers to the grape varieties Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre. The wine has good fruit, a touch of spice, a hint of a smoky flavor and a satisfying lengthy finish. A refreshing, flavorful wine. NIS 95

13. Dalton Majestic 2018

Dalton is producing some great wines under young winemaker, Guy Eshel. They have launched a project of artisan wines, recognized by brightly colored labels. My favorite is the Majestic, which is on the light side of medium. Made from an old vine Carignan, it has a bright cherry-berry aroma, a burst of fruit in the mouth and a refreshing finish. I loved it. NIS 100

14. Yarden Petit Verdot 2016

The Golan Heights Winery continues to show consistency and quality. An example is this Petit Verdot, a variety that shows really well in Israel, but usually as a blending grape. This is a fine example of a varietal Petit Verdot. It is deep colored, with aromas of black berry and black currant fruit, a hint of violets, and an oak backdrop. The wine has a rich finish. NIS 125

15. Chateau Golan Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 (NK)

One of our finest boutique wineries. The Cab is quite textbook. Deep cassis, ripe fruit, full-flavored with a good structure and a long well-balanced finish. For its quality, it actually represents good value. NIS 129

16. Penfolds Bin 2 Shiraz Mataro 2018 (NK)

Penfolds is one of the most famous wineries in the world. They make great wines at every price point. This wine is a blend of Shiraz, as you would expect from Australia, and Mataro, which we know as Mourvedre. The wine has great fruit, with earthy, savoury notes but also a chewy texture. A truly fine wine. NIS 135

17. Alpha Estate SMX 2016 (NK)

This is from the northwest of Greece. It is a deep-flavored wine from Syrah, Merlot and Xinomavro grapes, showing good fruit, concentration and com-

plexity. I am so pleased Greek wines are in Israel, and Alpha Estate is one of their finest wineries. Heartily recommended. NIS 139

18. Shiloh Secret Reserve Merlot 2016

Shiloh is a regular award-winner from the central mountain wine region. It is here where some of the best Merlots in Israel are made. This expression has aromas of deep, ripe black fruit aromas, a plush round mouth feel. It is full-bodied, oaky and opulent, but very well made. NIS 140

19. Gvaot Gofna Reserve Pinot Noir 2016

Gvaot is the pioneer of the new interest in local varieties. Look out for their Hamdani Jandali and new-ish Bittuni. I have, though, selected their Pinot Noir, which I believe is the finest I have tasted in Israel. It has that classic Pinot nose of raspberry, strawberry, with a floral character and a hint of mushroom and forest floor. NIS 155

20. Odem Mountain Nebbiolo Syrah 2017

This is an unusual blend from our northernmost winery. Nebbiolo is the great variety of Barolo, but an exotic, rarity here. The wine has mainly red fruit, cherries and strawberry. It is a nicely weighted wine with a certain elegance and has good length. I really wanted to taste this and was not disappointed. NIS 170

Finally, for those who believe this situation is the end of life as we know it, please be aware that nature continues unaffected. The vines have budded, the vineyards look beautiful, and everything seems optimistic after an unusually rainy winter.

To paraphrase from *Desiderata*, "Whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. With all the problems, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy." If you are in any doubt, look at the vineyards beginning their journey for the 2020 harvest. ■

The writer is a wine industry veteran who has advanced Israeli wine for over 30 years. He is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore.com