



The International Wine Review

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Report # 32: The New Wines of Israel

Introduction



Israeli wines are relatively unknown to wine enthusiasts. Yet this tiny Mediterranean country of 7 million inhabitants has a fast growing and dynamic wine industry that is gaining recognition in international markets for producing high quality wines. Since the 1980s, when there

were very few wineries in operation in Israel, the industry has grown rapidly. Today there are over 240 wineries, both large and small, throughout the country from the Lebanese border to the Negev producing 3 million cases from 4,800 hectares (12,000 acres) of wine grapes. Although the industry is dominated by a handful of large producers, there are many new and outstanding boutique wineries and "garagistes" who are handcrafting wines comparable to some of the best in the world.

In this report, the International Wine Review examines the new Israeli wine industry. We trace the growth and development of the industry from ancient to modern times. We identify some of the important pioneers of the industry and their contributions. We analyze the growing conditions in different regions of the country, the grapes under cultivation by kibbutzim and moshavs (cooperative agricultural settlements), and identify the improvements that have taken place in viticulture and winemaking over the years with the introduction of technology and know-how from both within and abroad.

While Israel is small, it has a remarkable number of highly trained and talented new and veteran winemakers, who are committed to improving the quality and authenticity of their wines. Many of these winemakers have been trained at UC Davis in California, as well as in France, Italy and Australia and have had extensive international winemaking experience. We

In this Issue

Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	2
Wine in the Land of Israel: A Brief History.....	3
Wine Regions.....	5
The Vineyards and Grapes of Israel	6
Winemaking	8
Wine Tourism	9
The Market for Israeli Wines	11
Tasting Notes and Ratings.....	23
Annex I: Israel's Young Winemakers	32
Annex II: Israel Wine Map.....	34
Previous Wine Reports.....	36

also examine the meaning of kosher and assess its impact on the wines. In the latter sections of the report we also examine the growth of wine tourism within Israel and the challenges facing the industry in the marketing of its wines in the United States. Many consumers still mistakenly view Israeli wines as sweet kosher wines made for the Jewish holidays.

We tasted more than 250 Israeli wines for this report, both kosher and non-kosher, and at all price levels. In the final section we present our tasting notes and ratings for these wines, which are at all price levels. Many of them are available in the United States, but, unfortunately, not all of them are exported, especially some of the more interesting ones from the boutique wineries. Nonetheless, savvy wine enthusiasts will want to search out the highly recommended wines on the market and give them a try.



In Memoriam. Daniel Rogov (1935-2011) was Israel's leading food and wine critic. Rogov, as he liked to be called, was passionate about food and wine and gained enormous pleasure from sharing his thoughts on wine and food with others.

Rogov was a prodigious writer and wordsmith. He was the wine and restaurant critic for the Israeli

daily newspaper HaAretz and contributed regularly to Robin Garr's Wine Lovers Page and several European newspapers and books on wine such as Hugh Johnson's *Pocket Wine Book* and Tom Stevenson's *World Wine Report*. However, Rogov was perhaps best known for his annual *Rogov's Guide to Israeli Wines*, which provided reliable assessments of the Israeli wine industry and Israeli wines.

Rogov was widely admired by Israelis and foreigners alike. We had the pleasure of meeting him in Israel a couple of years ago at the Yarden Vintage Festival and regularly corresponded with him, sending our articles on Israeli wines for his review. He was warm and generous with his feedback, and we had planned to seek his advice and counsel in preparing this report. Like so many others, we felt a tremendous loss with his passing last September 7. However, we have very fond memories of our encounters with him and have regularly referred to his writings in preparing this report. It is only fitting that we dedicate this report to his memory.

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Wine in the Land of Israel: A Brief History

Wine in Antiquity

Viticulture was practiced thousands of years ago in what is today the state of Israel.¹ It reached Israel from its birthplace in the Caucasus/eastern Turkey regions in 5,500-6,000 B.C. Around this time winemaking became an important occupation, and wine became a basic and important commodity in the Eastern Mediterranean. Inscriptions and seals of wine jars illustrate that wine was a commercial commodity being shipped in goatskins or jugs from ports such as Dor, Ashkelon and Joppa (Jaffa). Wine both thrived in the environment and offered worthwhile social and economic benefits to the society.



The golden period of wine production in antiquity is evidenced by the thousands of wine presses, large and small, unearthed in various locations in Israel, from Dan to Beer Sheva, Avdat and Shiva in the northern district to the Highlands of the Negev.

(The wine press pictured here is from Shomron unearthed around the Gvaot Winery by Shivi Drori.) Those wine presses unearthed thus far span an era of almost 6000 years of wine production. Wine exports took place from the land of Israel around the Mediterranean and North Africa to the borders of the Roman Empire in Europe from 3150 B.C. through the late Byzantine and early Islamic period. During this period real wineries were constructed with shelves, fermentation pits and screw pressing units. This glorious era of winemaking ended in the 7th and 8th centuries during the early Islamic reign over the area.

During the Muslim conquest of AD 636 wine presses were destroyed and wine production and grape cultivation activities for wine essentially ceased for about 1200 years, except among Christian monasteries. Over the centuries of Islamic rule alcohol production was banned as part of the Islamic dietary laws. Ancient Israeli vineyards were uprooted along with any indigenous grape varieties. The local varieties found by the turn of the 19th century were essentially table grapes rather than wine grapes. And it was these local varieties that were used by early wineries to make wine until the introduction of the European varieties by Baron Edmund de Rothschild in 1879-1890.

The Modern Period

In the mid-19th century, well before the establishment of Israel as a state, Jewish settlers in Palestine planted vines and made sacramental wines for Kiddush and sacramental reasons. In 1848 the first recorded winery was opened by Rabbi Mordechai Avraham Shor. As the family

¹This section is based on information provided in "Notes on the Israeli wine industry-past, present and future," compiled and arranged by Drs. S. Drori, E. Netzer and A. Hadas. See also Carey Ellen Walsh *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*.

grew the winery split into three separate wineries that still operate today: Arza, Hacormim and Zion. In 1870 Rabbi Abraham Teperberg founded the Efrat Winery in Jerusalem and also opened Mikveh Israel, the first agricultural high school. Financed and run by Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Jewish organization based in France, Mikveh had its own vineyards planted with European varieties (Alicante Bouschet, Petite Bouschet, and Carignan) and a cellar to make wine; it also trained many Jewish settlers. During 1879 to 1904 there was a wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine and the growth of additional agricultural settlements, including vineyards. However these settlers could not survive without help and turned for it to Baron Edmund de Rothschild of Chateau Lafite in Bordeaux.

Baron Edmond de Rothschild provided vital support to the Jewish settlements in Palestine. He financed the planting of vineyards near Rishon Le Zion on the coastal plain and sent teams of experts from Bordeaux to advise new local wineries on making fine wine. He also financed the construction of wineries of the Jewish settlements, first in Rishon Le Zion in 1882 and Zichron Ya'acov in the Mount Carmel area in 1890. Rothschild's vision was to make the Holy Land a source of kosher wines for Jews everywhere and to sustain the local Jewish settlers with a viable industry. Unfortunately, the settlements supported by Rothschild ran into hard times.

In the mid-1890's phylloxera, which had arrived from France, devastated the region's vineyards. In the period that followed the Bordeaux varieties were uprooted and replaced with cuttings of Carignan, Alicante Bouschet, Clairette, Grenache, Muscat, and Semillon and the proper root stocks that experts considered more suitable for the hot climate of Palestine. Before phylloxera took its toll there were about 2800 hectares (ha) of vineyards in Israel; by 1914 there were only 880.

In the early 20th century Rothschild helped to set up a cooperative of grape growers that managed the two wineries. Later his heirs sold their shares to the cooperative. The cooperative took the name Carmel Mizrahi and continued to be the dominant factor in the Israeli wine industry. Indeed, after independence in 1948 growers were required to sell grapes to the Carmel Mizrahi cooperative.

In the 1960's Carmel Winery and other producers successfully reintroduced Bordeaux and Rhone varieties, which have become the principal grapes used in Israel's premium wine industry. In recent years, winemakers have shown a renewed interest in producing premium wines with Carignan, Grenache, Mourvèdre and other Mediterranean varieties, as well as Italian and Portuguese varieties.

The Contemporary Period



Peter Stern

The contemporary period in Israeli wine history began in 1972 when University of California at Davis oenologist Professor Cornelius Ough visited the Golan Heights and recognized the high potential of the area for growing quality wine grapes. In 1976 Ough's advice was put

into practice by pioneering moshavim and kibbutzim that planted modern vineyards on the Golan Heights. In 1982 the first grapes from the Golan Heights were harvested, and Peter Stern, a seasoned UC Davis-trained winemaker, was hired to design a new Golan Heights Winery. The winery became operational in 1983 and with Peter Stern serving as winemaking consultant released its first wines that year to critical acclaim.

The Golan Heights wines were an immediate success not only within Israel but also abroad. And according to Daniel Rogov, Israel's esteemed wine critic, this success had a great impact on other Israeli wineries and led to a veritable quality wine revolution in the years



Victor Schoenfeld

ahead. In placing greater emphasis on the vineyard and introducing New World winemaking technology with uncompromising standards of excellence, Peter Stern played a key role in launching the wine revolution of the 1990s. Perhaps most importantly, Peter Stern is credited with recruiting new winemaking talent to Israel from UC Davis, starting most notably with the Golan Heights Chief Winemaker, Victor Schoenfeld. From the 1990s to the present, Schoenfeld has not only helped build the winery's international reputation for excellence, but he is also credited with recruiting many internationally-trained winemakers who have gone on to lead winemaking projects throughout Israel. In 2002 Peter Stern also began serving as winemaking consultant to Carmel, helping that winery make the transition from a mass market to a quality wine producer.



Israel Flam

In addition to Peter Stern and Victor Schoenfeld, several other pioneers contributed to Israel's wine revolution. After training in Stellenbosch, South Africa and UC Davis, Israel Flam returned to Israel in the mid-1970s and became part of Carmel's winemaking team at the Rishon Le Zion winery

where he became Chief Winemaker in 1995. For over 35 years he was responsible for winemaking at both Rishon Le Zion and Zichron Ya'acov and later oversaw the building of Carmel's new outstanding boutique wineries and winemaking facilities, including Yatir, Zichron and Kayoumi. Most recently he assisted his sons in establishing Flam Winery, one of Israel's finest boutique wineries located in the Jerusalem Hills.

The late Ronnie James was another pioneer, best known for his work in the vineyard. Initiator of the winery venture at Kibbutz Tzora, James played a very important role in the emergence of quality wineries in Israel. After thirty years of tending the vineyards of the kibbutz and selling grapes to other wineries, he decided to found the first kibbutz winery in 1993. Overcoming the



Ronnie James

reluctance of the kibbutz directorate (which did not attach a high priority to producing wine), he succeeded in establishing the Tzora Winery. Tzora Winery was the first small winery to use all the grapes from its own vineyards, instead of buying grapes from elsewhere. Many vineyard owners and agriculturists all over the country followed in his footsteps.



Ed Salzberg

American born Ed Salzberg, Chief Vintner at Barkan, has been at the helm at Kibbutz Hulda since May 1996 working under CEO Shumel Boxer. Salzberg learned winemaking at UC Davis, acquired winemaking experience in California and New York's Finger Lakes district, and worked at other Israeli wineries such as Carmel, Tishbi and Binyamina, before joining Barkan. He has built up a strong team of winemakers like Ilrit Boxer-Shank. Under his leadership,

Barkan has become one of Israel's finest large wineries.

Israel's Wine Industry Today

Today, Israel's wine industry is a mosaic of large and small producers. There are roughly 240+ wineries in operation producing an estimated 36 million bottles of table wine annually from about 12 thousand acres. Of these, three very large commercial wineries—Carmel, Barkan-Segal, and the Golan Heights Winery—account for 75 percent of all the dry table wine produced in the country. The big three are the backbone of the industry and are responsible for most of the wines exported to the U.S. These and other large commercial wineries each produce up to 10 million bottles annually. They are owned and operated by other food and beverage companies, cooperatives, and by one family, Teperberg, which has been in the wine business since the 19th century.

Table 1 Israel's Ten Major Commercial Wineries

Winery	Location	Owners	Production Bottles (Mil.)
1. Carmel Winery	Zichron Ya'acov	SCV des Grandes Caves	10.0
2. Barkan-Segal	Hulda	Tempo Beer Industries	6.5
3. Golan Heights Winery	Katzrin	Golan and Galilee Vineyards	5.0
4. Binyamina Winery	Binyamina	Hezi Hinam Supermarket	3.2
5. Teperberg 1870	Tzora	Teperberg Family	3.0
6. Tishbi Winery	Binyamina	Tishbi Family	1.0
7. Galil Mountain	Yiron	Golan Heights Winery	1.0
8. Recanati Winery	Emek Hefer	Lenny Recanati	0.9
9. Tabor Winery	Kfar Tabor	Central Bottling co.	0.9
10. Dalton Winery	Ramat Dalton	Haruni Family	0.8

A second group of five mid-sized wineries produce from 800,000 to one million bottles annually. They include Tishbi Galil Mountain, Recanati, Tabor, and Dalton Winery. They are family-owned and operated with the exception of Galil Mountain, which is owned by the Golan Heights Winery and local kibbutzim.

The large majority of wineries are boutique and “garagiste” wineries that are family owned and operated. These wineries are often the fulfillment of a dream and the expression of a deep passion by the owner. They produce high quality hand-crafted, premium wines in small quantities. These wineries were initially located in the Judean Hills and coastal plains but have since sprouted up in the Galilee and elsewhere, including the Negev. Production ranges from 10 to 40 thousand bottles each.

Wine Regions

Israel is a small wine producing country by any measure. In land area it is a mere 8,630 square miles—290 miles in length North to South and 85 miles across at the widest point. The country is bordered by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, Egypt to the southwest and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. The width of the country from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea in the east can be crossed by car in about 90 minutes.

Israel enjoys a Mediterranean climate ranging from temperate to tropical with abundant sunshine for growing grapes. For a small country it has a surprising variety of micro-climates. It has two distinct seasons, a rainy period from November to May and a dry summer season for the ensuing six months. Rainfall is relative heavy in the north and center of the country with 700 mm but much less in the northern Negev and with negligible amounts in the south. Irrigation is normally needed in summer in most of Israel.

Several mountain ranges run the length of the country. In the northeast, there are the volcanic basalt landscapes of the Golan Heights, a plateau rising from near the Sea of Galilee to Mount Hermon in the far North. There are also the hills of Galilee, largely composed of soft limestone and dolomite, ranging from 1,600 to 4,000 feet (500 to 1,200 m) above sea level.

Israel is divided into five wine growing regions. While these regions are not part of an appellation controlee system, regional and sub-regional names appear on the labels of varietal wines. These regions are the following:

Galilee

The Galilee is Israel’s northern-most winegrowing region and its coolest. It is also one of the country’s largest with 41 percent of total plantings. The region extends from the Lebanese border south and consists of the sub-regions of the Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee, Tabor and the Golan Heights. The hills and mountain plateaux of the region, cool breezes and large diurnal temperature variations, offer ideal growing conditions for premium wines. The growing season is also relatively long, and water is readily available for drip irrigation in the hot summer months. The Upper Galilee has predominantly stony clay brown Mediterranean soils of varying depths and stones overlaying hard chalk and dolomite rocks. In the southern part of the



Galilee the soil is a brown black Mediterranean clay soil of basaltic origin, less rocky than the northern region with deeper soils and good water retention.

The Wineries and the Wines in the Galilee. Some of Israel’s largest and finest wineries are located in this region and are concentrated in the Kedesh Valley on the Lebanese border and the Mount Meron area in the Upper Galilee and on the Golan Heights. The most noteworthy are the Golan Heights Winery, which is owned by four moshaves and four kibbutzes and produces 600 thousand cases of wine annually, and Chateau Golan on the Golan Heights. Galil Mountain, a much smaller winery that produces high quality wines, and Dalton are also producing excellent wine in the Upper Galilee.

Shomron

The Shomron wine region is located near the Mediterranean coast south of Haifa and includes the Carmel Moun-

tain Range. The main vineyard area is around the towns of Zichron Ya'acov and Binyamina where in the latter part of the 19th century Baron Edmond de Rothschild promoted viticultural settlements. Shomron is the most traditional of Israel's grape growing regions and is characterized by gentle slopes, low hills and wide valleys. The region has medium-heavy soils and a Mediterranean climate with cool breezes. It consists of three sub-regions: Mt. Carmel, Sharon and Shomron Hills. The wineries based here include Binyamina, Margalit, Tishbi and Carmel's Zichron Ya'acov Cellars. These wineries rely in part on grapes grown in other areas for their better wines.

Samson

The Samson region also runs parallel to the Mediterranean Sea and includes the coastal plain southeast of Tel Aviv and the rolling hills between the Jerusalem Mountains and the coast. The region is warm and humid, conditions that are not ideal for growing premium grapes. There are a few large vineyards here that produce inexpensive wines. About 27 percent of plantings are situated in this region. The wineries of this region include Carmel's Rishon Le Zion Cellars, Barkan, Karmeï Yosef and Soreq.

Judean Hills

The Judean Hills wine region surrounds the city of Jerusalem at altitudes of up to three thousand feet. It extends from north of Jerusalem to the Yatir Forest south of Hebron and includes 10 percent of total vineyard plantings in Israel. Wine has been made here since Biblical times. However, it is only in recent decades, with the emergence of Israel's modern wine industry, that this region has assumed importance as a premium wine producing area. In fact, not long ago it was assumed that the best wines were destined to come only from the Galilee and Golan. However, since the late 1990s there has been a dramatic growth in boutique and mid-sized wineries in Israel, and many of them have been established in the Judean Hills.

The Judean Hills sub-regions include the vineyard areas of Jerusalem, Gush Etzion and the Yatir Forest. The Jerusalem Mountains have a rugged terrain, and many of the vineyards are grown on terraces or in narrow valleys. The mountains offer attractive growing conditions for producing premium wine. Their limestone and chalky soils are well-suited for low-yielding vineyards, and the Mediterranean to semi-continental climate provides good growing conditions for most varieties. Although the region experiences hot summer temperatures, it also is exposed to refreshing cool, damp nights. Average winter temperatures are 30° to 64° F while summer temperatures vary from 60° to 86° F. Annual precipitation is 20 inches. Under these growing conditions grapes are able to develop phenolic ripeness and flavor without having the baked character often found in wines of hotter regions. They also contribute to wines with good acidity and overall balance and structure.

The Wineries and Wines of the Jerusalem Mountains.

There are about 30 wineries in the Jerusalem Mountains. They are mainly family owned and operated or linked to a kibbutz. An exception is Yatir, which is owned by Carmel although operated independently. The acknowledged

pioneer of the region is Domaine du Castel, a family estate founded in 1988 by Egyptian-born wine entrepreneur Eli Ben Zaken. Domaine du Castel put the region on the map with their first vintage in 1992. Other wineries followed shortly thereafter and began attracting attention for the quality of their wines. It is noteworthy that several of the winemakers, like Australian-trained Eran Goldwasser of Yatir, have acquired training and experience outside of Israel. This is a positive trend and augers well for the future of Israel's wine industry.

Negev

The Negev is an arid desert region comprising about half of Israel's land area. It is a difficult region in which to grow grapes. Yet with use of high tech drip-irrigation, Israeli wineries are producing grapes here. The Negev represents 5 percent of total vineyard plantings concentrated in two sub-regions—Ramat Arad in the northeast, an area 600-700 meters above sea level with large diurnal temperature variation, and the Central Negev Highlands, a more arid area of sandy loam soils and hot dry summers where it is very challenging to grow grapes.

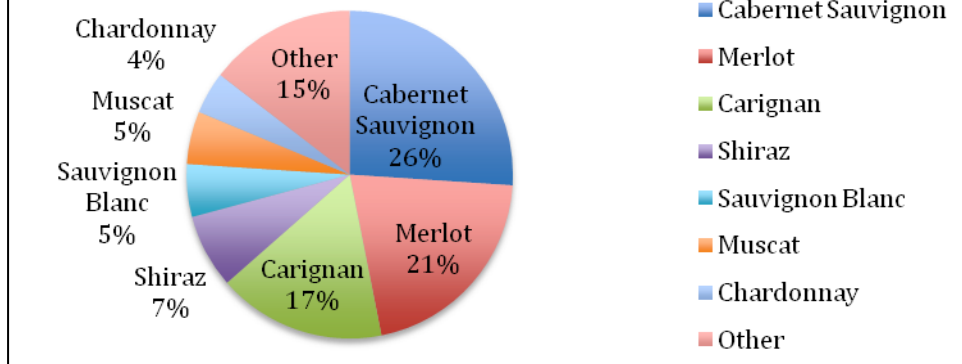
The Wineries and the Wines of the Negev. Yatir, which is owned by Carmel, is one of the finest wineries in the Negev. It is situated at the foot of the Tel Arad archeological site in the northeastern Negev with vineyards located in the Yatir Forest at the southern edge of the Judean Hills at about 3,000 feet. Carmel has vineyards at Ramat Arad. Barkan has begun development of Mitzpe Ramon in the middle of the Negev. Sde Boker winery is also here, though much smaller.

The Vineyards and Grapes of Israel

The approximately 4,800 hectares under vine in Israel represents an increase of 55 percent in cultivated land area since the mid-1990s. Most of the vineyards planted in Israel are located in the Shomron, Samson and Galilee regions. New vineyards have been spreading throughout the country, and the fastest growing regions are the Galilee, in particular the Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights, and the Samson region, mainly in the Judean Foothills. Many new vineyards will be coming into production in the next few years. Large and medium-sized wineries like Barkan and Benyamina are increasing their plantings of grapes as are smaller start-up wineries. The current projections are that total vineyards will reach 6,000 ha by 2013.

Israel's principal grape varieties are shown in Table 2. As Israel does not have its own indigenous grape varieties, its wine grapes have been imported from France, Italy, and other countries. The red varieties (77 percent of the total grapes planted) consist mainly of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carignan and Syrah (Shiraz). However, a wide variety of other grapes are planted in smaller quantities: Petite Sirah, Cabernet Franc, Argaman, Zinfandel, Tempranillo, Italian and Portuguese varieties, and even Pinotage. White grapes are 23 percent of total plantings and consist mainly of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscat of Alexandria followed by small amounts of Viognier, Riesling and other varieties.

Grape Varieties: Share of Plantings



Red Wine Grapes

Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cabernet Sauvignon cultivated in Israel is originally from France. It is produced as a single varietal and blended with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and other varieties. The grape does well in Israel. It ripens well in the long growing season in the Galilee.

Merlot. Currently 20 percent of total plantings, Merlot was first planted in Israel in the 1980s, and was the first varietal produced by the Golan Heights Winery in 1986. It was heavily planted during the 1990s in Galilee and the Golan Heights and is used in blends and single varietals at all price points.

Carignan. This grape has a relatively long history in Israel. It was first planted in the 1880s by a small number of farmers in the Rishon Le Zion and Zichron Ya'acov areas. Due to its very high yields and versatility for making both sweet Kiddush wines and dry red table wines, it remained a favorite of growers up until the 1970s when it reached 55 percent of all grapes planted in Israel. However, in subsequent decades with the growth in popularity of Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varieties, Carignan fell out of favor. Today some winemakers are realizing that Carignan may also have a bright future in Israel if yields are drastically reduced and old vine Carignan vineyards are brought back into service. Both Carmel and Vitkin wineries have taken the lead in producing quality Carignan.

Shiraz/Syrah. Israel has become a new home for this grape which was introduced over a decade ago from France and Australia. It is especially well suited to Israel's hot climate but grows well almost everywhere, including at high altitudes. There are plantings of Syrah in vineyards all over Israel, although it does especially well at higher altitudes in the Galilee. While only 7 percent of total plantings, Syrah appears to be growing in importance and over time could become Israel's #1 red grape.

Petite Sirah. Until recently, most Petite Sirah in Israel was used in entry level blends. Today a few wineries are also

producing interesting Petite Sirah varietals. Carmel produces one from 40-year old bush vines in the Judean Hills, and boutique wineries such Sea Horse and Vitkin produces others. Petite Sirah has good potential in Israel—it grows well in warm climates and produces inky wines with attractive dark fruit flavors.

Cabernet Franc. This grape was planted in Israel along with other Bordeaux varieties in the 19th century by Baron Edmond de Rothschild. However, it lost favor with growers because of its low yields and a lack of market and was finally grubbed up and replaced by other varieties. Cabernet Franc returned to Israel in the 1990s, first in blends produced by the Golan Heights Winery and later as a single varietal by Carmel, Margalit, Recanati, Psagot, Ella Valley and Vitkin. The grape does well in the cooler growing areas of Israel, especially in the Upper Galilee.

Argaman. This grape, which means deep purple in Hebrew, is a cross between Carignan and the Portuguese grape Souzao. It was first developed by Professor Roy Spiegel of the Volcani Institute of Agriculture to replace Carignan as Israel's main blending grape. While Argaman was successfully grown in the Galilee and produced by Avi Feldstein, winemaker at Segal's, it has not attracted much interest, and vineyards where it was planted are being uprooted.

White Wine Grapes

Sauvignon Blanc. Although Sauvignon Blanc totals only 5 percent of plantings in Israel, it is the most popular premium white wine grape along with Chardonnay. Transplanted from the Loire, it was first produced in Israel as a single varietal by Carmel in the 1960s and by Yarden in 1983. Today there are many wineries producing excellent Sauvignon Blanc both as a single varietal and as a white blend at all price points. Sauvignon Blanc grows best in the cooler Upper Galilee and Golan, but there are also excellent plantings in the Judean Hills as well as the Negev.

Chardonnay. Along with Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay is widely planted throughout Israel and is produced in a variety of styles. Many wineries are producing ripe, fruit-forward and creamy Chardonnays which go through malolactic fermentation, are aged sur lie with and without battonage for up to 12 months, and have moderate acidity. Other producers favor somewhat more elegant and leaner styles showing less malo and more aromatics, minerality, and acidity. Chardonnay is also being blended effectively with Viognier and Semillon (Clos de Gat's Chanson) with Sauvignon Blanc (Flam Blanc) and Gewüztraminer (Gvaot).

Viognier. There is only a tiny amount of Viognier planted in Israel, but several wineries are using this aromatic grape to produce single varietals and white blends. As in the Rhone, it is also co-fermented and blended with Shiraz. As it is adaptable to the warm growing conditions of the Mediterranean, Viognier may have a bright future in Israel.

Tracing the Origins of Local Varieties. With the revival of wine production in Israel, groups of vintners and growers have attempted to determine which of the local, indigenous grape varieties can be traced to the Biblical ones. Ampelographic comparisons carried out by a group headed by Nachshon Sne have concluded that some or most of the local varieties are remains of old grape varieties. Preliminary DNA finger printing carried out on the same varieties, by Dr. B. Klein from the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, found some resemblance to old Greek varieties.

This line of research on a wider basis is currently carried out by a group headed by Dr Shivi Drori, who owns Gvaot Winery, at the Ariel University Center. Besides looking into the DNA finger prints of the local varieties, researchers are investigating their use for wine making. Shivi Drori's recent research has been on efforts to analyze DNA on Israeli varieties that survived the Muslim takeover centuries ago. About 35 varieties survived, mostly big berried fleshy table grapes and the challenge is to determine if any of these grapes can be propagated to make good wine.

Viticulture

Israel's semi-arid Mediterranean climate and scarcity of fresh water create great challenges for growing grapes. These challenges are especially severe during the growing season from March to October. While daily temperatures in the Golan average in the high 70's to high 80's in July/August, they can climb to over 110° for extended periods in the Negev/Ramat Arad areas.

Irrigation. Until the introduction of commercial irrigation in the mid-1950s, producers were limited to dry farming with rain-fed water. However, with the introduction of drip feed irrigation—which the Israelis pioneered in the 1960s—and other water management techniques, producers have been able to reduce water use and increase productivity. Nonetheless, water scarcity remains a critical problem for Israeli agriculture, and research and experimentation continues on the use of new and improved methods of water management and techniques for the application of saline water and grey water in irrigation.

Thus far, experiments using saline water with drip irrigation methods have yielded mediocre wines and resulted in the dying off of vines five years after planting. Salt resistant rootstocks like "Salt Creek" have performed poorly, and vineyard longevity has been short—less than 10-12 years. Irrigation with treated sewage water has resulted in grapes with excessive vegetative growth, delayed ripening (due to high nitrogen loads) and poor color, aroma and phenol development (due to excessive phosphorus levels) and high acidity (due to high potassium levels). The resulting wines were also mediocre. Future use of treated sewage water will require costly measures to reduce potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus loads in the water.

Vineyard Planting. The majority of vineyards in the last couple of decades have been planted 1.5 x 3 meters. The average density is 2,220 vines per hectare. Most vineyards are cordon spur pruned in a VSP (vertical shoot position) to enable mechanical harvesting. Older vineyards in the Jerusalem Hills are planted with gobelet and bush vines in stone lined terraces.

The preferred exposure for grape growing is north facing slopes with vines planted east to west. This allows for the cooling Mediterranean winds from the west to cool and ventilate vines and reduce humidity. Top producers like the Golan Heights Winery practice precision agriculture. Having developed detailed soil maps of their vineyards, they are able to identify smaller and smaller parcels and to blend grapes according to different levels of ripeness. They also practice rigorous canopy management in order to reduce vine vigor and protect grapes from over exposure and sunburn.

Plant Propagation. Plant propagation in Israel today is carried out in collaboration with the French Etablissement National Technique pour l'Amelioration de la Viticulture (ENTAV). Under this arrangement Israel has been able to more effectively control the propagation of diseased plants (a problem in the past) and to develop its own plant nursery to propagate plants licensed from ENTAV. The Golan Heights Winery serves as ENTAV's partner within Israel and hosts the nursery for the wine industry. Because of a shortage of plant material, the Israeli government has granted permission to wineries to import plant material, but grafting is only done by the national nursery.

Winemaking

Israel has a remarkable number of highly trained and experienced wine makers. Most have acquired their training internationally at top enology schools such as the University of California at Davis, the University of Bordeaux, and Adelaide University in South Australia. Many also have valuable hands-on professional work experience at wineries outside of Israel. In recent years, aspiring winemakers have also been able to acquire competent training within Israel at a two year program at Ohalo College in Katzrin as well as in short courses at Tel Hai College's Cellar Master Course in the Upper Galilee and Ariel University Center of Samaria.

There are many talented veteran winemakers in Israeli today who have contributed to the development of the

Israeli wine industry. They include such names as: Victor Schoenfeld of Golan Heights, Israel Flam (then of Carmel), Sasson Ben Aharon of Binyamina, and Gil Shatsberg of Recanati. In addition to the veterans there is outstanding up-and-coming talent such as: Lior Lacser of Carmel Winery, Eran Goldwasser of Yatir Winery, Uri Hetz of Chateau Golan, Lynn Gold of Ella Valley, Asaf Paz of Vitkin and Binyamina wineries, and Micha Vaadia of Galil Mountain. Annex 1 provides brief profiles of some of these rising stars in the Israeli wine industry.

Not surprisingly, winemaking in Israel follows the advanced winemaking practices of the top wineries around the world. The main harvest is from August to October, although it can begin in July and go until early November. The larger wineries harvest by machine and by hand, whereas the small boutique wineries only harvest by hand using small totes to deliver fruit to the winery. Both large and small wineries harvest at night or in the early dawn hours to avoid the heat of the day. Most wineries initially sort grapes in the vineyards so that the clusters of grapes which reach the winery are ripe and disease free. They then do a second manual selection on a sorting table to eliminate leaves and other vineyard debris as well as damaged grapes and under-ripe clusters.

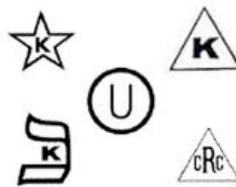
Most Israeli wineries process grapes from different lots separately. Once the fermentation process is completed, the wine is transferred to wooden barrels for a period of 14-17 months. This is carried out in aging rooms and cellars that are ventilated and cool, while temperature and humidity are checked constantly. Most Israeli wineries use French barriques for aging wine, while a few use American oak. Israeli wineries mainly use second or third harvest barrels in order to limit the influence of the wood's natural taste and to preserve the unique character of each variety of grape and of each plot.

Kosher Winemaking

Most Israeli wines are kosher but some are not. Kosher wines follow much the same processes and techniques as modern wineries employ. However, there are a series of kosher or kashrut requirements in both the vineyard and winery that must be adhered to and certified by the appropriate authorities in order for a wine to be kashrut or kosher. In brief, to be considered kosher, Sabbath-observant male and female Jews must be involved in the entire winemaking process and all the equipment, tools and winemaking storage facilities must be kosher. Since most of the experienced winemakers in Israel are not observant, this means that they can't touch the wine or the equipment, during the winemaking process.

Grapes from new vines cannot be used until four years after planting, no other crops can be grown between vine rows, and after the first harvest the vineyard must lie fallow every seventh year, known as shnat shmita. During the production of kosher wine, no animal products such as gelatin, which are regularly used to clarify wines, may be used. Instead, kosher wine makers use bentonite, a clay material, which pulls suspended particles to the bottom of the barrel. A wine described as "kosher for Passover" must have been kept free from contact with grain, bread and dough.

Physical cleanliness is also mandated under kosher requirements. Tanks, crushers, presses and all equipment must be cleaned three times by modern steam cleaning, scalding hot water and when needed, blowtorches. All barrels must be brand new and/or used exclusively for kosher wines. No barrels used for non-kosher wines may be used in kosher winemaking.



Hechsher. When kosher wine is sold commercially to Orthodox Jews, it must have the hechsher ("seal of approval") of a supervising agency or organization (such as the "OU" sign of the Orthodox Union), or of an authoritative rabbi. Popular Kosher symbols and certification labels are shown here.

Mevushal. There are actually two levels of kosher wine. The first includes the requirements outlined above, while the second, known as "mevushal" utilizes an additional process. This is important since kashrut law stipulates that in order for a wine to retain its 'kosherness' once opened and poured by a non-Jew, (such as a waiter, for instance) the wine must be mevushal. For some observant Jews, only mevushal wines reputedly are considered kosher.

Whereas in ancient times, mevushal wines were boiled, these days they are flash pasteurized. Under this process, after the grapes are crushed, and before fermentation, the liquid/must is rapidly raised to 80-90°C in special tanks for under a minute and then quickly "in a flash" are chilled down to 15° C.

For the consumer of Israeli wines, the big question is whether kosher wines are negatively affected by these requirements. The answer based on our extensive tastings of kosher wines is that kosher requirements do not negatively impact the quality of the wines and that some magnificent kosher wines are being produced in Israel. Moreover, according to the late Daniel Rogov, Israel's talented wine critic, "several of the requirements are widely acknowledged to be sound agricultural practices even by producers of non-kosher wines." With regard to the mevushal wines, experiments at the University of California at Davis are reputed to have shown that it is not possible to consistently perceive the sensory differences between non-mevushal and mevushal wine. In our own limited tastings of selected mevushal wines, we were generally impressed with the quality of the wines, but could not confirm how flash pasteurization might have affected certain wines. Suffice it is to say that none of the highest quality wines of Israel are mevushal.

Wine Tourism

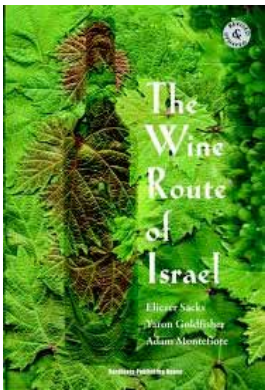
Israel is fast becoming a wine and food destination par excellence. In the 1990s it experienced a gastronomic revolution marked by the emergence of countless new restaurants and cafes offering high quality local and international cuisine. Today, both Israelis and tourists from abroad are able to enjoy Israel's rich and diverse culinary

heritage and an increasing number of high quality wines in restaurants and wine shops.

There are also a growing number of wine and food festivals held throughout the year or bi-annually. For the past six years the Golan Heights Winery has organized a spectacular two-day Yarden Vintage Festival to celebrate the wine and food of Israel. Prominent local and international chefs present their culinary creations and hold open food and wine workshops for attendees. Jerusalem features a yearly three night festival in July or August at the Israel Museum, home of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This event attracts tens of thousands of visitors tasting over 100 wines from over 30 wineries. Haifa, Rishon Le Zion, Ra'anana, the Judean Hills and Beer Sheva also feature local festivals with about 30 wineries at each.

Wine tourism in Israel is still in its infancy, much like the industry itself. However, Israelis who have an interest in wine and consume it on a regular basis are also visiting wineries, according to a study at the University of Haifa.² Israeli wine tourists, like wine tourists anywhere, share an interest in wine and food and the pleasures of life in general. They are between the ages of 25-44 years old, of middle to upper income, and relatively well educated. Those visiting wineries do so out of an interest in tasting wine, learning more about it, and buying it. Research also suggests that in planning the future of wine tourism, there are benefits to be gained from integrating wine tourism with regional tourist attraction, especially restaurants and other gastronomic attractions.

Israeli Wine Routes



Several Israeli wineries have become attractive tourism destinations by opening visitor centers and tasting rooms where tourists can take winery tours, taste wine and learn about Israel's wine culture. Some also offer food and have shops where they sell wine, olive oil, and wine accessories. While the larger wineries are usually able to accommodate walk-in tourists, smaller wineries are not equipped to handle tours and tastings without prior reservations. Below, we summarize some

of the major Israeli Wine Routes which the wine and food tourist, both Israeli and foreign, will enjoy. The best bet in arranging any tours is to call the winery in advance and make reservations.³ Pictured here: *The Wine Route of Israel* published by Cordinata is a coffee-table book listing more than 90 wineries all over Israel with maps. In it, there are some useful and informative introductory essays written by Adam Montefiore.

²The Study of Consumer and Spatial Behavior of Israeli Wine Tourists" Noa Hanoon and Yoel Mansfeld University of Haifa Department of Geography and Environmental Studies published 22-11-2008 in www.wines-Israel.com

³All of Israel's largest wineries produce certified kosher wines, while many of the boutique wineries do not. At kosher restaurants, meals will either be meat or dairy focused as is the custom and no pork or shellfish will be served.

The Golan Heights, Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee Wine Route. This northern region of Israel is home to Israel's finest vineyards and wineries and offers some of the best wine tourism in the country. The centerpiece of this wine region is the Golan Heights Winery, Israel's third largest winery and one of its finest. It has a very attractive visitor center for tours and tasting and a wine shop. The winery also has plans to open a wine/tapas bar. Also located in the Golan Heights are smaller but noteworthy boutique wineries such as Chateau Golan near the Sea of Galilee and Bazelet ha Golan, Odem Mountain and Pelter. Chateau Golan combines art and wine at its visitor center like some other wineries around the world. The Upper Galilee is home to Galil Mountain Winery on Kibbutz Yiron (which has a lake for picnics). It's adjacent to the Lebanese border among kiwi groves and sports one the most scenic vistas in the Galilee. Several small wineries dot the region, but one cluster well worth exploring is around the Dalton Winery. They have a new visitor center and are planning on building a 200 room hotel nearby. Within walking distance is the Adir Winery, which also features a goat cheese dairy where you can taste both cheese and wine and have light lunches in their tasting room. The Northern region is easy to get around by car and has other historic sites to combine with winery visits.

The Mt. Carmel Sharon Plain Wine Route. Mt. Carmel, Israel's historic vineyard area, is one of the most beautiful regions of Israel and has a high concentration of vineyards, particularly around the towns of Zichron Ya'acov (see picture) and Binyamina. Located south of Haifa, where the mountains and the Mediterranean meet, it is easily



accessible by car and is home to several wineries large and small, and even tiny garagistes, all in close proximity. Three of Israel's largest wineries, Carmel, Binyamina, and Tishbi Winery have attractive visitor centers and other tourist facilities as well as shops and restaurants. Carmel features underground cellars that were established by Edmond de Rothschild of Bordeaux's Chateau Lafite Rothschild in the late 19th century. The Tishbi Winery also features special gourmet chocolate tastings. The smaller ones like Amphorae, Somek and Smadar offer tastings, the latter two in a homey atmosphere literally one block from each other in downtown Zichron. Smadar also has a modern boutique four room inn with a heated pool and hot tub. There are gardens, a museum and other tourist sites nearby celebrating Zichron Ya'acov as "Israel's Wine Village."

Gush Dan/Central Coastal Plain Wine Route. This area south of Tel Aviv includes Israel 2nd largest winery Barkan and its sister winery, Segal, which are at the forefront of Israel's wine industry. Their modern state-of-the-art winery is located on Kibbutz Hulda and is adjacent to Israel's largest vineyard. The boutique Vitkin, Alexander, Saslove, Avidan, Yaffo, Villa Wilhelma, Chillag and Benhaim wineries are all within a one half hour drive of Tel Aviv and host tourists by appointment.

Jerusalem Hills Wine Route. This region located in hills and mountains around Jerusalem is home to Israel's growing number of outstanding boutique wineries. While these small wineries have limited tourist facilities, many welcome visitors. Flam, Domaine du Castel, Clos de Gat, Tzora, Gush Etzion, and Ella Valley Vineyards are some of the wineries that may offer tours and tastings. Flam, Domaine Castel, and Clos de Gat are producing first-class wines. Tzora sells gourmet food and has an attractive garden area for picnicking. Gush Etzion has a beautiful building which looks like a newly built synagogue. Jerusalem is also the site of the legendary Machane Yehuda open-air food market, a gourmand wonderland which hosts the annual Balabasta food festival in August.

Judea & Samaria/West Bank Wine Route. North of Jerusalem there are several wineries hospitable to guests. Along route 60, the Psagot Winery is the first winery heading north and shares a modern visitor center with the region's council. Further north, the Tanya and Domaine Ventura wineries share the same parking lot in the village of Ofra overlooking their vineyards. Up the road are the well respected Gvaot Winery and Shiloh wineries. The last stop going north is the Mt. Blessing Winery, a small estate winery which makes meals to order for guests. Staying on the main road in this area is of the utmost importance. South of Jerusalem is the Gush Etzion Winery, which has a beautiful building that features a restaurant open from breakfast to dinner. The Lone Tree Micro-Brewery is nearby.

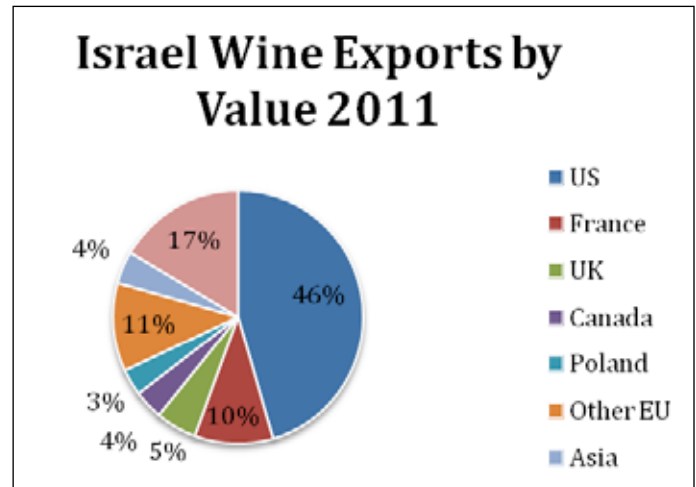
Negev Wine Route. The Negev Desert wine route consists of several wineries. Sde Boker Winery is a small winery on the grounds of the Sde Boker Kibbutz in the northern Negev and specializes in handcrafted wines made of Zinfandel and Carignan. It is next to the former desert home of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Burion. Yatir Winery, one of Israel's finest boutique wineries, is located near the Dead Sea and the ancient Canaanite settlement of Tel Arad. Yatir is producing wines from grapes grown in their estate vineyard in the Yatir Forest, which is located about 20 minutes from the winery in the southern Jerusalem Hills. There are three other small family wineries further south in the Negev Boker Valley Vineyard that has a wine lodge and restaurant, the Carmey Avdat Winery cultivates grapes and produces wine using ancient irrigation terraces, and Neot Smadar, the most southern winery in Israel, produces wines from organic vineyards.

The Market for Israeli Wine

Most of the wine produced in Israel's young wine industry is consumed domestically. Of the 26 million liters produced in 2010, 88 percent by value was consumed within Israel and only 12 percent was exported. While annual per capita consumption of wine is only about 4 liters at present, (compared to 9 in the U.S., 21 in the UK and 45 in France), there are indications that demand is increasing, especially for dry table wine, and will continue to grow in the coming years. The value of wine exports will also likely increase with the improvements in quality and

given increased attention to the marketing and promotion of Israel wines in international markets. Given the strong public interest in America in Israel, the U.S. market offers especially attractive opportunities for Israeli wine exports.

Israel's wine exports total \$26.7 million. As shown in the graph, the U.S. market accounts for 46 percent of the total and the UK, France and other EU countries some 30 percent of the total.



The demand for Israeli wine in the U.S. primarily comes from consumers seeking kosher wine, either because they keep kosher or wish to drink kosher wines for Passover and other Jewish holidays. Thus, Israeli producers wishing to export their wines to the U.S. have found it highly advantageous to become kosher themselves.

Israel competes with numerous other suppliers of kosher wine in the US. This includes California wineries such as Hagafen, Herzog and Covenant—that exclusively make kosher wine—as well as others that make a line of kosher wines as part of a mostly non-kosher production. In addition, there are a growing number of international suppliers of kosher wine, including Capcanes in Spain and Mouton Cadet and Fortant in France. Some Champagne houses also make kosher Champagnes— e.g., Laurent-Perrier and Drappier.

The demand for Israeli wine is not unlike the demand for other wines—it's influenced by the price and quality of Israeli wine; the price and quality of competing non-Israeli, kosher wine; and non-price variables such as cultural and religious ties to Israel. While there are few data on any of these variables, we know that the quality of Israeli wines has increased in recent years at the same time that the supply of non-Israeli, kosher wines has also been increasing.

Kosher grocery stores are an important sales outlet for Israeli wines, especially for those who keep kosher. Another important outlet is wine stores in communities with large Jewish populations; they often market Israeli and other kosher wines on shelves especially designated for kosher wines. Israeli wines of high quality are almost always placed on kosher shelves, thereby limiting their potential sales to the third group of consumers identified above.

This is the principal marketing challenge for the marketing of quality of Israeli wine—putting emphasis on the Israeli origin of wines as opposed to their kosher nature, which to many consumers implies wines of lower quality.

If Israel's wine industry is to grow in the coming years it will need to intensify the marketing and promotion of its wines in international markets. Presently, the government's role is relatively modest and limited to sponsoring periodic tastings of Israeli wines in the U.S. and in Europe and to organizing a bi-annual wine festival in Tel Aviv for representatives of the trade and the media from within Israel and abroad.

The wine industry, on the other hand, has done very little itself to promote the wines of Israel in international markets. There is more competition than cooperation among Israeli wineries and no producers' association to market the industry as a whole. In fact, were it not for individuals like Adam Montefiore of Carmel and Yatir, who writes about wine for the Jerusalem Post and other publications, and a growing number of Israeli wine bloggers such as HaK-erem: The Israeli Wine Blog, and Yossie's Corkboard there would be little, if any reliable information in the media to educate consumers and the trade about Israeli wines.

The most promising new initiative to promote Israeli wines in the U.S. is the recent creation of the Israeli Wine Producers Association (IWPA). The organization was established by the Royal Wine Corp in Bayonne, New Jersey, the largest importer of Israeli and kosher wines in the U.S. The IWPA includes some of Israel's largest wineries such as Carmel, Barkan and Binyamina and some of the finest small boutique wineries like Domaine du Castel, Yatir Winery and Flam Winery. The organization is headed by Joshua Greenstein, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing. The IWPA is currently limited to Royal Wine Corp customers.

Adam Montefiore



As an advocate of Israeli wines, Adam has been contributing as a prolific writer for Israeli and British wine magazines, wine books and websites including regular articles in the Jerusalem Post and Jewish Chronicle and contributions to books by noted wine author Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson MW, Oz Clarke and others. Whichever winery Adam works for, he has proven to be an incredibly effective advocate for his employer as well as for the Israeli wine industry as a whole, so much so that when someone speaks of "an Israeli Wine Ambassador," it's Adam Montefiore who most often comes to mind.

Tasting Notes and Ratings



The International Wine Review team tasted 200+ wines for this report. The wines were tasted in Israel, in our offices, and in situ with the Royal Wine Corp, the largest importer of Israeli wines in the U.S. The tastings were conducted by Mike Potashnik, Publisher, Don Winkler, Editor, and Joel Butler, MW, of our Editorial Team.

The wines reviewed here are a broad selection of the wines produced in Israel today, both kosher and non-kosher. Many are from the large and medium-sized wineries, but quite a few are also from the growing number of boutique wineries that have emerged on the wine scene in the last five years. Virtually all the wines are premium wines, although Israel's larger wineries also produce many entry-level wines that are widely distributed in the U.S.

While many Israeli wineries export their wines to the United States, quite a few of the smaller ones do not because they don't produce enough wine or are too new to have found a U.S. importer. Indeed, many of most interesting handcrafted wines—which we reviewed in Israel—are not exported but are included here to provide readers with a comprehensive view of the quality and diversity of Israel wines. Readers should also be aware that 2008 was a shmita year in Israel, a sabbatical year during which land owned by Jews Israel is supposed to be left to lie fallow. Thus importers of kosher wine like Royal Wine Corp did not import wines from the 2008 vintage.

The tasting notes and ratings are organized by winery. We provide background information on each winery and the wines reviewed. Most wineries that export their wines are kosher or kosher and are so noted with a (K) in the background information on the wineries. Those which are not kosher are identified as (NK). The importers of the wines are also noted.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

95 and above	A wine of distinction
91-94	A wine of outstanding or superior quality
89-90	A wine of very good to excellent quality
87-88	A wine of good quality
85-86	A wine of fair or acceptable quality
84 and below	Not recommended

Adir (K) Adir Winery is located in the heart of the Upper Galilee region. Adir is a family-owned and operated winery (it also owns a large goat dairy) that was founded in 2003 by Avi Rosenberg who is also its current winemaker. Avi graduated as a Cellar Master from Tel Hai Academic College. Adir's vineyard, Kerem Ben Zimra, was planted during the 1980s and 1990s and rises to 870 meters above sea level. Situated along the slopes of the Admon Mountains, it benefits from excellent growing conditions with plenty of sunlight and diurnal temperature variation. This is our second opportunity to review Adir wines, and we are highly impressed with the wines being produced by this young estate. **No U.S. importer**

Adir Wines 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Kerem Ben Zimra

Upper Galilee 91 The Adir 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a medium ruby color and has aromas of red berries, black currants, herbs and graphite. Aged in French and American oak, the wine is youthful and soft and has a velvet texture with good raspberry fruit concentration and a long finish. Still youthful, the wine would benefit from an additional two to three years time in the bottle to come together for peak drinking pleasure. **Adir Wines 2009**

Cabernet Sauvignon Plato Kerem Ben Zimra Upper Galilee

91+ Opaque ruby purple, this is a powerful 100% Cabernet Sauvignon with lots of dark fruit aromas and flavors. Soft and round in the mouth and on the palate, it exhibits excellent density of flavor, charred oak and a persistent finish. Some loam and black currant fruit flavors give added depth. Aged for 24 months in French oak, it is beautifully balanced with perfect structure. Aged for eight months in the bottle, it will benefit from two to three years of additional aging for peak drinking. **Adir Wines 2010 Shiraz**

Kerem Ben Zimra Upper Galilee 88

The Adir 2010 Shiraz is dark ruby in color and displays Rhone-like aromas of pure blackberry/boysenberry fruit, toasted oak and a hint of brett and tobacco. On the palate it has meaty black fruit flavors, ripe tannins, lots of glycerin, and a firm finish. **Adir**

2010 "A" Upper Galilee 92

This is a magnificent blend of 60% Shiraz, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. Opaque ruby, it boasts a perfumed nose with black pepper, violets and smoked meat. It is soft and round on the palate with dense fruit flavors of cassis, pepper and black currant. It is beautifully balanced and has round tannins and a firm finish. *A highly successful wine.*

Agur Winery (K) This is a small winery owned by Shuki Yashuv and located on Moshav Agur in the Judean Hills. Shuki, who serves as winemaker, learned to make wine as an assistant to Ze'ev Dunie, the talented owner and winemaker of Sea Horse Winery. Ze'ev also assisted Shuki at the start up of his winery in 1999 and 2000 as did the late Ronnie James of Tzora Vineyards. Production: 30,000 bottles. **Importer:** Dionysus Imports, Manassas, VA

Agur 2009 Kessem Judean Hills 87+ Kessem is composed of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot. It is medium ruby in color and reveals aromas of red and black berry fruit with notes of herbs and earth. On the palate it shows good structure and acidity with tannic grip and a moderately lengthy finish. **Agur 2009 Rose Judean Hills 87** This fresh tasting rose is a blend of 60% Cabernet Franc and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. Light rose-orange in color, it offers flavors of raspberries, orchard fruit, nuts, spices and herbs. It is nice and crisp and lively on the palate and would be a great match with grilled tuna, quiche and Mediterranean salads. **Agur 2008 Special Reserve Judean Hills 87+** The 2008 Special Reserve is made up of the same blend as the Kessem. One year older, it offers more elegance on the palate and riper rounder tannins. It has flavors of red berries, chocolate and hints of vanilla, all nicely integrated with a long finish.

Alexander Winery (K) This boutique winery was founded by winemaker Yoram Shalom in 1996. It is located in Beit Yitzhak, a moshav in Hefer Valley. Yoram learned winemaking at home from his father Alexander Shalom. After serving as a photographer with Israeli Television he followed his passion and became a full time winemaker and owner of his own winery. He sources the grapes for his wines from three high altitude vineyards in the Upper Galilee. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Alexander 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Israel (\$25) 88 This is a distinctive Sauvignon Blanc. It offers dusty and herbal aromas on the nose and has a ripe and leesy palate with bright acidity and pleasant tartness on the finish. **Alexander 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$38) 89+** Opaque ruby. The Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve offers aromas of black currant fruit and toasted oak. Aged for 24 months in French oak, it has concentrated black fruit flavors, coffee, and licorice on the palate. It is beautifully balanced and has a long finish. Sourced from a low-yielding single vineyard in Har Mitzpe Hayamim at 690 meter above sea level in the Upper Galilee. **Alexander 2007 Alexander the Great Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$70) 90** This Cabernet Sauvignon from low-yielding vineyards,

exhibits a beautiful opaque ruby color and aromas of ripe blackberry and toasted oak on the nose. Aged for 36 months in oak (80% French and 20% American) it offers a soft lush mouth feel, dense ripe black fruit flavors, and big round tannins on a long finish. Sourced from low-yielding vineyards. **Alexander 2009 Syrah Galilee (\$38) 91** The 2009 Syrah shows meaty dark fruit aromas with gorgeous dark fruit flavors on the palate like liquid black forest cake with a pure black cherry chocolate finish and soft round tannins. **Alexander 2007 Amorolo Galilee (\$130) 91+** The Amorolo is styled along the lines of an Italian Amarone and is produced from fruit that is dried on mats. It is dark ruby in color and offers aromas of dried black cherry, plum, earth, and oak spice. Aged for 40 months in oak and 12 months in bottle, it displays a rich concentrated palate of fruit and secondary notes. Only just released, the wine is showing well and will doubtlessly improve with age, although it is approachable now.

Amphorae Wines (NK) This winery is located on the Makura farm in the Western Carmel region north of Zichron Yaakov. After some early successes under head winemaker Gil Shatzberg, it was acquired in 2008 by the Dubov family in partnership with Guy Rylov and winemaker Dr. Arkady Papikian. The winery sources its grapes from high altitude vineyards in the Golan Heights, Upper Galilee and the Judean Mountains. The wines consist of the top quality Makura Collection, Rhton Collection and Mediterranean Collection. The Makura Collection wines are flavorful and pleasant to drink, although relatively high in alcohol. **No U.S. Importer.**

Makura Collection: Amphorae Wines 2007 Makura 90 Makura is a blend of 42.5% Syrah, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon and 22.5% Merlot. Still young and evolving, the wine displays a dark ruby color and has spicy black fruit aromas on the nose. On the palate, it offers pleasant high-toned flavors of black fruit, chocolate and cacao. Yet it also has a slightly dry mouth feel, high alcohol (15.3 alc.) and gripping tannins on the finish. Aged for 36 months in French oak, this wine needs time to come together and will perhaps deserve a higher score when it does. **Amphorae Wines 2007 Makura Merlot-Barbera 89** This is a successful blend of 79% Merlot and 21% Barbera offering a medium ruby color with a pure and fragrant red berry fruit bouquet. It reveals nicely integrated fruit and toasted oak flavors with an elegant mouth feel. While slightly high in acidity, it has round silky tannins and freshness on the finish. It should drink best within the next 3 years. **Amphorae Wines 2007 Makura Cabernet Sauvignon Upper Galilee 91+** The 100% Cabernet Sauvignon is dark ruby and boasts aromas of black currant fruit and toasted oak.

Rich and lush on the palate, it is nicely concentrated with excellent structure and balance showing medium high acidity, round firm tannins and a long finish. While high in alcohol (15% alc), the wine carries it well and should improve with age for the next five years, and possibly longer. **Rhyton Collection: Amphorae Wines 2007 Rhyton 91** The 2007 Rhyton is a blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Syrah and 10% Merlot. It exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of very ripe red and blackberry and raisin/plum compote with 15.3% alc. Aged for 24 months in 300-500 L French oak barrels and 10 months in bottle, it reveals a soft velvet texture, highly concentrated black fruit flavors with hints of herbs, chocolate, leather, and tannic grip on the mid-palate and finish. **Mediterranean Collection: Amphorae Wines 2011 Med Rosé 90** This rosé is a lovely blend of Cabernet Merlot and Syrah, made by the saignée technique. It has a pink-violet color and fresh pepper-floral aromas, quite pronounced and inviting. It is crisp and lively on the palate with juicy berry fruit flavors, with some spicy elements. It is very fresh, intense and dry with a good zesty finish.

Assaf Winery (NK) Assaf Winery was founded in 2004 by owner Assaf Kedem formerly a partner in Bazelet Hagolan Winery. Assaf's winery is located on Kidmat Zvi in the Golan Heights. The winery owns its own vineyard situated at 500-800 meters above sea level and is planted with Bordeaux and Rhone varieties, Pinotage and Zinfandel. Assaf Kedem serves as winemaker having gained training and practical experience in Haifa and in Stellenbosch. **No U.S importer.**

Assaf Winery 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Golan Heights 88 Full deep ruby color. The Cabernet Sauvignon is blended with Cabernet Franc and exhibits opulent floral cassis blackberry and plum aromas. Aged for 14-18 months, it is powerful, dense, and quite chewy on the palate, with rich tannins and stylish oak highlights. The tannins are a bit stiff right now and the wine looks to need 5-6 years to soften. **Assaf Winery 2009 Cabernet-Shiraz Golan Heights 87+** This 50-50 blend shows a full deep ruby color. Aged in oak for 14-18 months, it has opulent floral, cassis, blackberry and plum aromas. It has a powerful, dense, quite chewy palate, with rich tannins, stylish oak highlights, and surprisingly, not especially alcoholic on the finish. The hard tannins will likely need 5-6 years to soften. **Assaf Winery 2011 Zinfandel Rosé Golan Heights 88+** This young wine, just bottled when tasted, exhibits a pretty pink violet color with raspberries on the nose. Crisply fruity, quite dry and very tangy, there is also a touch of watermelon, with medium body and quite a zesty fresh finish.

Barkan Wine Cellars (K) Barkan is one of the largest and most successful wineries in Israel. Established in 1990 by Shmuel Boxer and Yair Lerner, two experienced grape growers, Kibbutz Hulda is the center of Barkan's operations, which control 500 hectares of vineyards all over Israel. Barkan produces a variety of premium wines in different series: The Altitude Series-a mini-series design to show differences among three Cabernets produced from different vineyards at different altitudes; the Reserve Series of high quality premium varietal wines; the Classic Series of highly affordable varietals; and the Superior Series, which is Barkan's finest wines produced from rigorous barrel selections in the best years. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Altitude Series: Barkan Winery 2007 Altitude 412 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$44) 92 This lovely Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve exhibits a dark ruby hue with ripe black currant and cassis flavors on the nose. These are mirrored on the palate, which is smooth and fruit-focused with hints of cedar, spice and chocolate. The wine was aged for 14 months in French barriques and shows excellent balance, round tannins and a long lasting elegant finish. The grapes for this wine were sourced from the Avne-Eitan vineyard situated at 412 meters above sea level and the Dishon Vineyard in the Kedesh Valley. **Barkan Winery 2007 Altitude 720 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$44) 91** This Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a medium ruby color and aromas and flavors of red and black cherries, plums and cassis with hints of minerals and cedar. Aged for 14 months in French barriques, it is rich and flavorful on the palate showing purity of fruit with overall elegance and perfect balance.

Reserve Series: Barkan Winery 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galil (\$23) 89+ This Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas and flavors of red berry fruit, black currants, earth, and cedar on the nose. Aged for 20 months in French barriques, it reveals a chalky mouth feel with spicy fruit flavors and a pleasant finish. **Barkan Winery 2007 Reserve Merlot Galilee (\$33) 89+** The Reserve Merlot offers fresh red berry fruit and herbal notes on the nose that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 14 months in French barriques, it has a soft velvet smooth mouth feel with pure dark cherry fruit and spice, and of medium weight, with excellent balance and firm tannic structure.

Classic Series: Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$12) 85 The Classic Cabernet Sauvignon offers light black currant fruit on the nose and dilute blackberry fruit flavors on the palate. It is an easy drinking, quaffing wine with a short finish. **Barkan Winery 2010**

Classic Merlot Galilee (\$12) 87+ The Classic Merlot has a medium ruby hue and offers aromas of fresh fruity plum. On the palate it reveals fresh plum flavors and is straight forward and easy drinking with a pleasant finish. **Great value!! Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Shiraz Dan (\$12) 87** The Classic Shiraz offers dark plum and charred oak flavors. It is soft on the attack with dry and astringent tannins on the mid-palate and on the finish.

Superieur Series: Barkan Winery 2006 Superieur Shiraz Judean Hills (\$65) 92+ The 2006 Shiraz Superieur is a magnificent wine and is the first vintage released by Barkan. The wine is a blend of 86% Shiraz sourced from the Kiryat Anayim vineyard in the Judean Hills, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Dishon vineyard and 4% from the Dovev vineyard, both in the Upper Galilee. These components are aged in French oak for 18 months and blended. Dark ruby in color it offers aromas of red and black fruit with toasted oak and spice. On the palate, it offers a silky texture of concentrated fruit with hints of chocolate, excellent balance and a persistent finish. **Barkan Winery 2007 Superieur Pinotage Judean Hills (\$65) 92** This Pinotage has an opaque ruby hue and offers flavorful dark plum fruit with toasted oak. Aged for 17 months in mostly French oak, it is soft, round and mouth filling with concentrated red plum and cedar flavors. A delicious wine with excellent balance and purity of fruit that is every bit as good as the Pinotage made in South Africa. It is drinkable now and will be at its peak for the next three to five years. Sourced from Barkan's Tel-Safi vineyards in the Judean Hills.

Other Wines Reviewed: Barkan Winery 2007 Altitude 624 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$23) 91 Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Pinot Noir Negev (\$12) 86+ Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Merlot Argaman Dan (\$12) 86 Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Petite Sirah Dan (\$12) 87 Barkan Winery 2010 Classic Pinotage Samson (\$12) 87 Barkan Winery 2007 Reserve Pinotage 12 months barrel aged Judean Hills (\$65) 89 Barkan Winery 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Judean Hills (\$17) 88 Barkan Winery 2007 Superieur Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$65) 92

Bazelet Hagolan (K) Located on Moshav Kidmat Zvi in the Golan Heights, Bazelet Hagolan Winery is owned and operated by Yo'av Levy. Founded in 1998, the winery specializes in Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot and also produces Chardonnay, other blends and Grappa. The wines are stylistically high in alcohol, heavily oaked, and have ripe flavors not unlike Amarone di Valpolicella, which guides Yo'av Levy's winemaking. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Bazelet Hagolan 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Israel (\$45) 90+ This Cabernet Sauvignon offers fresh ripe black cur-

rant and cedar on the nose. It is rich and complex on the palate with a superb dense finish. The wine is sourced from old basalt vineyards and is beautifully balanced with round tannins and a long finish. **Bazelet Hagolan 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Golan Heights (\$60) 88** Dark ruby. This recently bottled Cabernet Sauvignon was dominated by oak at the time of tasting, but there are quite rich, ripe black cherry, smoky fig, plum and lots of dried fruit flavors. Medium-bodied, the wine reveals soft tannins, and good balance. **Bazelet Hagolan 2009 Merlot Reserve Golan Heights (\$60) 88+** Also recently bottled at the time of tasting, the Merlot Reserve exhibits a dense bouquet showing black fig, plum, coffee and cocoa aromas with light vanilla notes. The wine has rich, dried black fruit flavors, with medium tannins and good acidity to support the ripe, raisin flavors and provide counterpoint to the alcohol. Served at a cool temperature, the alcohol is balanced, while the tannins are firm with dense graphite, plum-raisin and bitter chocolate on the finish. This is close to Amarone!

Binyamina Winery (K) This large commercial winery was established in 1952 by Joseph Zeiter, an Hungarian immigrant. Originally called Eliaz Winery, it is located in the town of Binyamina in the region of Shomron. In the early days, the winery produced sweet and simple table wines and liqueurs. However, beginning in the 1990s new investors transformed it into a producer of premium wines and renamed it Binyamina Winery. Today, the winery is owned by another private investment group of the Hatzi Hinam marketing chain. Binyamina sources its grapes from vineyards all over Israel and produces wine under five labels, three of which are reviewed here: The Chosen, a series of six special handcrafted wines; Binyamina Reserve, the estate flagship label of premium varietals; and Yogev, made from grapes sourced from different growers. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne NJ

Chosen: Binyamina 2008 Diamond Dry Red Galilee (\$70) 91 The 2008 Diamond is a special blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Upper Galilee and Golan Heights and 40% Syrah from the Judean plain and Galilee, and 10% Petit Verdot from Shomron. Medium ruby-purple in color, the wine is aged for about 18 months in new French oak barrels. It is very polished with stylish flavors of vanilla, blackberry fruit integrated with a touch of cassis, a hint of graphite/cedar and some dried herbs adding nuance. The wine is ripe and fresh with balanced tannins, restrained oak on the palate (even though 90% new). It has lots of extract to buffer the oak! The **2007 Diamond** also tasted for this report has a slightly different blend but is comparable in quality.

Benjamina Reserve: Binyamina 2010 Chardonnay Unoaked Reserve (\$20) 89+ The Unoaked Reserve Chardonnay displays a ripe tropical nose with a hint of flint and dried herbs on the nose. It has a richly flavored palate of pear and apple flavors and a creamy leasy mouth feel. Overall, the wine is clean and crisp with excellent balance and freshness. **Binyamina 2009 Carignan Reserve Lower Galilee (\$20) 89.** This lovely deep ruby-violet Carignan reveals ripe, rich black fruit and coffee aromas with toasted oak. It has full smoky black fruit and light licorice flavors on the palate with very round tannins, medium acidity and good balance. This Carignan is more polished than most with a supple finish and able to age 3-5 years. Sourced from a 25-30 year old vineyard in the Lower Galilee. **Binyamina 2007 Merlot Reserve Galilee (\$25) 91** This is a terrific Merlot offering ripe plum fruit and toasted oak aromas on the nose and a soft lush palate with a velvet texture, medium weight and perfect balance. The tannins are soft and round and the finish is long and elegant. Merlot is certainly one of the top wines being produced by Binyamina in the Reserve series.

Yogev: Binyamina 2009 Yogev Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$16) 87 This Yogev Cabernet Sauvignon has a dark ruby color and aromas of black currant fruit with red berry highlights. It is soft and generous on the attack with a slightly dry mid-palate and a short finish. "Yogev" means tiller of the soil, the grapes for this and others in the series are sourced from a variety of growers. **Binyamina 2009 Yogev Cabernet Sauvignon & Shiraz Galilee (\$16) 87+** This 50-50 blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz displays a dark ruby color and aromas of black currant fruit and red berries. It has a soft and silky texture with a slightly soapy mid-palate and a long fruity finish. **Binyamina 2009 Yogev Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot Galilee (\$16) 88** This is a blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Petit Verdot. It offers black currant fruit, pepper and spice on the nose. It is soft on the attack with good structure and balance and an elegant palate with soft tannins and a moderately good finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Binyamina 2009 Chardonnay Reserve Galilee (\$20) 89+ 2008 Ruby Galilee 91+ Binyamina 2009 Chardonnay Judean Hills (\$16) 88 Binyamina 2009 Reserve Zinfandel Galilee (\$25) 89 Binyamina 2009 Reserve Late Harvest Gewürztraminer Cluster Select Galilee (\$3) 89 Binyamina 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$25) 89+ Binyamina 2009 Shiraz Reserve Galilee (\$25) 89 Binyamina 2009 Yogev Malbec & Carignan (\$16) 89 Binyamina 2009 Yogev Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Samson (\$16) 88

Carmel Winery (K) Today's exciting wine scene in Israel owes much to Carmel, the country's first and largest winery. The first vineyards at Carmel winery were planted using French rootstock at Rishon Le Zion, south-east of Jaffa, in 1882 by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, owner of Bordeaux's Château Lafite Rothschild. Today, Carmel produces a wide range of wines, from economy to super premium in quality and price. Its top wines are world class. Lior Lacser, formerly with Michel Roland's Château Bon Pasteur, serves as Chief Winemaker with a team of eight winemakers led by Haim Wachtenhaim at Rishon Le Zion Cellars, Yiftach Peretz at Zichron Ya'acov Cellars, Kobi Arens at Kayoumi Winery and Eran Goldwasser at Yatir Winery. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Appellation Series: Carmel Winery 2009 Chardonnay Appellation Upper Galilee (\$27) 87 This easy going, medium-straw colored Chardonnay offers aromas of pear and melon with citrus zest. It is medium-bodied and fresh tasting with moderate fruit flavors and a touch of vanilla on the palate with a dry finish. It is partially fermented and aged sur lie in French oak barriques for 6 months. **Carmel Winery 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz Appellation Upper Galilee (\$27) 88** This 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Shiraz blend offers black currant and leafy aromas on the nose. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is soft on the attack with notes of leather, roasted meat and herbs. Well balanced with round tannins on the finish. **Carmel Winery 2007 Appellation Old Vine Carignan, Shomron/Mt Carmel (\$30) 87+** The Old Vine Carignan is sourced from 35-40 year old vines originally planted in Carmel/Zichron Ya'acov in the 1880s. The wine offers ripe, sweet black cherry and earth aromas, followed by plum and some dried tobacco. Rustic, yet fairly elegant on palate, it reveals nice sweet berry fruit, mild tannins and a hint of gaminess.

Kayoumi Vineyard Series: Carmel Winery 2010 Single Vineyard White Riesling Kayoumi Vineyard Galilee (\$30) 90 The Carmel Single Vineyard White Riesling Kayoumi is a nicely made dry Riesling offering aromas of stone fruit, orange peel, and a touch of petrol. It is medium-weight on the palate with a soft texture and delicate citrus fruit flavors with good balance and acidity on the dry finish. A beautiful dry Riesling from an outstanding vineyard, previously best known for its outstanding red wines. **Carmel Winery 2007 Kayoumi Shiraz Upper Galilee (\$44) 90** The Kayoumi 100% Shiraz exhibits a deep ruby hue and aromas of black fruit, roasted meat and tobacco. Aged for 15 months in French barriques, it is silky on the palate, as well as complex and layered with nuances of black and red berries, coffee, mushrooms and forest floor. The grapes

for this wine are sourced from Carmel's Kayoumi Vineyard located in the foothills of Mount Meron. **Carmel Winery 2007 Kayoumi Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Upper Galilee (\$44) 90** The Kayoumi 100% Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of dark plum fruit and black currants on the nose. It is elegant on the palate and provides rich ripe fruit with some interesting herbal and chocolate notes. Aged for 14 months in French barriques, it shows a silky texture with good concentration and a long finish.

Top of the Line Cuvées: Carmel Winery 2007 Limited Edition Upper Galilee (\$80) 92 The Limited Edition is Carmel's super-premium flagship wine. A Bordeaux style blend, it is opaque ruby purple in color and offers aromas of black and red fruit and toasted oak on the nose. Aged for 15 months in French barriques, it is soft and elegant on the palate with highlights of violets, chocolate, licorice and tobacco. It is nicely structured and persistent on the palate. The blend consists of 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Petit Verdot, 5% Merlot, 5% Malbec and 2% Cabernet Franc. **Carmel Winery 2007 Carmel Mediterranean Shamron (\$60) 92** This Mediterranean inspired blend displays a dark ruby purple color and offers complex aromas of red and blackberry fruit, smoke, earth, forest floor, cinnamon, and leather. Aged for 15 months in French barriques, it provides layers of flavor with slightly dry tannins and a long satisfying finish. The blend consists of 37% Carignan, 26% Shiraz, 20% Petit Verdot and other varieties. The grapes are sourced from Carmel's vineyards from all over Israel including the Upper Galilee, Zichron Ya'acov, Judean Hills and the Negev. **Carmel Winery 2007 Sha'al Single Vineyard Late Harvest Gewurztraminer Upper Galilee (\$30) 91+** The Sha'al Late Harvest Gewurztraminer exhibits a beautiful golden amber color and has aromas of apricot and ripe lychee. On the palate it reveals a round and honeyed mouth feel with moderate sweetness and very good acidity on the finish. The grapes for this wine are grown in the Sha'al Vineyard and harvested in late October. The wine is fermented at low temperature at Carmel's boutique winery in Zicron Ya'acov. Try this beauty with figs or white cheese or just enjoy it on its own.

Other Wines Reviewed: Carmel Winery 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Upper Galilee (\$27) 88 Carmel Winery 2007 Cabernet Franc Upper Galilee (\$27) 90 Carmel Winery 2006 Merlot Appellation Upper Galilee (\$27) 87 Carmel Winery 2006 Petite Sirah Old Vines Appellation Judean Hills (\$30)88 Carmel Winery 2008 Kayoumi Cabernet Sauvignon Upper Galilee 89 Carmel Winery 2008 Limited Edition Red Upper Galilee 91 Carmel Winery 2008 Kayoumi Vineyard Shiraz Upper Galilee]89 Carmel Winery 2008 Mediterranean Old Vines 91

The Cave (K) This is a small winery owned by Binyamina which produces a proprietary blend called the Cave. The wine is vinified at Binyamina and matured in new and used French oak barrels for 24 months in a large cave originally built in the 16th century. The Cave also produces a Cabernet Sauvignon not reviewed here. **Importer:** Royal Wine Imports, Bayonne, NJ

The Cave 2008 Red Upper Galilee 91 The Cave is a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, and 2% Petit Verdot. Medium dark ruby, the wine conveys a subdued, complex bouquet of black fruit, herbs, and tobacco with a hint of new oak spice. Aged in French oak (40% used) it has a medium+ body, a supple, bright integrated palate; very fine tannins with some slightly cherry-like notes on the finish. Some mineral-loam earthiness adds intrigue to this polished, elegant wine.

Chateau Golan (NK) Located in the southern area of the Golan Heights on Moshav Eliad, Château Golan released its first wines in 1999. The winery owns and operates its own vineyard, which is located near Gesher and in close proximity to the winery at 375 meters above sea level. It also has a strong commitment to wine and art. Uri Hetz, one of Israel's most talented young winemakers, has been making the wines at this estate winery since 2001. The two wines reviewed here are impressive. Not Kosher. **No U.S. Importer.**

Chateau Golan 2009 Syrah Reserve 88 Full violet-ruby color. This Syrah has a Northern Rhone-like bouquet of strong black raspberry, graphite, violet and meatiness. On the palate, it is ripe, firm and quite rich with sweet berry fruit upfront; it is medium-bodied, and has firm finishing tannins. It is a very solid wine with delicious anise, black fig fruit on the medium intense finish and needs 4-6 years of bottle aging for best drinking. **Chateau Golan 2009 Eliad Red 93** This is a powerful Cabernet Sauvignon-based blend with 5% Petit Verdot. It has a medium dark ruby color and aromas of graphite, and black fruit. On the palate it exhibits dense and tannic flavors redolent of black currant liqueur and licorice! Highly extracted, but impressive in terms of its purity and sheer muscularity, which doesn't go over the edge to a Schwarzenegger-like cartoon!

Clos de Gat (NK) This winery located in the Ayalon Valley of the Judean Hills region is among Israel's finest boutique wineries. In 1998, in partnership with Kibbutz Harel, winemaker Eyal Rotem, who learned winemaking in Australia, began planting vines on 19 hectares and building a winery on the land surrounding his house. An ancient "Gat" (Hebrew for wine press) is located on the grounds of this modern winery, and the tasting room building was Yitzhak Rabin's headquarters near the front line during the 1948 War of Independence. The wines are aromatic, rich in flavor and beautifully balanced. **Importer:** SolStars Inc. New York, NY

Clos de Gat Collection: Clos de Gat 2010 Chanson Blanc Judean Hills (\$30) 88

The 2010 Chanson is a blend of 70% Chardonnay, 20% Semillon, and 10% Viognier/Chenin Blanc. Medium green-gold in color, this unoaked blend offers orchard and stone fruit aromas at first, then something more opulent and perfumed with hints of fig. Elegant on the palate, it has medium acidity and good length on the finish. **Very tasty.**

Clos de Gat 2009 Chardonnay Judean Hills (\$45) 89

This is a rich Chardonnay with nutty, lees-inflected aromas, supported by solid chardonnay and peach-apple fruit and hints of grain. Medium-bodied, it offers full lemon flavors with no phenolic bitterness, with grainy-mineral notes on the smooth but firm finish, very much like good white burgundy. It is indigenous yeast fermented with one year in oak on fine lees with sparing batonnage. Can keep 3-4 years.

Clos de Gat 2007 Ayalon Valley Red Judean Hills (\$50) 91

Ayalon is a Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Dark ruby in color, it displays a bouquet of black cherry and tea with hints of cassis and very pleasing oak. Aged for 20 months in new French oak, it is richly textured, somewhere between Bordeaux and Washington State with quite rich cassis-berry flavors, integrated oak, and creamy yet firm tannins. It is a full and lengthy, well made wine with 5-7 years at least of aging ahead and shows real sophistication.

Har'el Collection: Clos de Gat 2009 Har'el Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$30) 89

This Cabernet Sauvignon has 11% Merlot & Petit Verdot and is aged 12 months in 30% new French oak. It is deep ruby with a slightly cedar nose and a hint of anise. Medium-bodied, it boasts ripe flavors yet full tannins; not too forward, and is well made and quite rich in the end, with a firm Bordeaux-like structure leading to a slightly austere finish. The wine will require 5-7 years to soften.

Other wines reviewed: Clos de Gat 2009 Har'el Merlot Judean Hills (\$31) 91

Sycra Collection: Clos de Gat 2007 Sycra Syrah Judean Hills (\$60) 88

Sycra means 'bright red' in Aramaic. It is sourced from a single plot and is aged for 20 months in new French oak. It is near opaque blue-ruby and has ripe vine-roasted blackberry aromas with anise and a touch of coffee-mint from oak. Medium-bodied, it has fresh berry flavors, firm tannins and integrated oak with lovely freshness on the finish, though perhaps still a bit tightly structured. It will need 3-5 years to open up.

Dalton (K) Founded as a boutique winery in 1995 in the mountainous Upper Galilee by the Haruni family,

Dalton has grown steadily over the years to become one Israel's most successful producers of premium wines. Current production is a little over 70,000 cases. Its wines are produced by winemaker Na'ama Mualem, who was trained in California and at the University of Adelaide in Australia. She joined Dalton in 2002. She has been assisted by Australian consulting winemaker John Worontshak. **Importer:** Allied Beverage Group, LLC, Long Island, NY

Dalton Winery 2010 Fume Blanc Upper Galilee (\$16) 88

The 2010 Fume Blanc offers fresh light citrus aromas. On the palate it reveals light fruit flavors with crisp acidity.

Aged for four months in large oak casks, it reveals a pleasant creamy mouth feel and a dry finish. **Dalton Winery**

2009 Shiraz Upper Galilee (\$25) 90 This Shiraz displays a bright medium dark ruby color and aromas of ripe plum licorice and charred oak.

Aged in oak barriques for 8 months, it reveals round ripe tannins, excellent balance and a long finish. **Dalton Winery 2009 Zinfandel Upper Galilee (\$25) 91**

The 2009 Zinfandel from Dalton's Mount Meron Vineyard displays a medium ruby color and aromas of ripe plum and blackberry. It boasts a softly textured palate of ripe fruit, cedar, round tannins and a firm finish. **A**

delicious wine. Dalton 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Upper Galilee 89

This Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of black currant and red berries on the nose. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, it is well balanced and integrated with medium weight, young firm tannins, and a long finish. **Dalton 2010 Petite Sirah Shimshon 89+**

The opaque ruby Petit Sirah offers black fruit aromas and a soft velvet smooth palate with notes of violets and cloves. Aged in American oak for 12 months, it is still rather young and in need of time in the bottle to integrate dry tannins and toasted oak. A wine of good potential. **Dalton 2009 Alma 90+**

The Alma is a Rhone blend of 82% Shiraz, 12% Mourvedre and 6% Viognier. Dark ruby purple in color, it reveals aromas of black cherry, black currant and smoke on the nose. Matured in oak barriques for 15 months, it has a velvet smooth palate with rich ripe dark fruit flavors, excellent balance, and a persistent finish.

Domaine Du Castel (K) Domaine du Castel is a family estate founded in 1988 by Egyptian-born Eli Ben Zaken. The estate is located in the Judean Hills in Ramat Razi, ten miles west of Jerusalem at 2,300 ft. Ben Zaken bottled his first vintage of Grand Vin in 1995, which he sourced from a small vineyard he planted next to his home. Today, he produces wine from both his own high density, low-yielding vineyard and from local growers he supervises under contract. Ben Zaken serves as winemaker and now works with his sons Ariel and Eytan. Domaine du Castel is one of the top wineries in Israel, producing four excellent kosher wines for a total of about 8,500 cases. The wines are beautifully crafted and Old World in character. The Grand Vin is a stand out. **Importer:** Royal Wine Company, Bayonne, NJ

Domaine Du Castel 2010 'C' Blanc du Castel Judean Hills (\$50) 90 The 2010 "C" Blanc du Castel is a 100% Chardonnay. It has a medium green gold color with fresh aromas of white peach, marzipan and honey aromas with underlying yeast and nuttiness. On the palate, it reveals average acidity and mineral flavors; just a touch of alcohol on the finish decreases freshness. Very good, but this wine is more like a Northern Rhone white than a typical Chardonnay. **Domaine Du Castel 2008 Grand Vin Judean Hills (\$75) 91** This is a medium ruby red garnet blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. It boasts a fresh violet-black cherry and herbal bouquet. Medium bodied, it has distinctive, mineral/graphite, black cherry and currant flavors, as well as elegant, round tannins. It is not a big wine, but it is very stylish. Needs 4-5 years for peak drinking and is a cut above the excellent 2007 vintage. **Domaine Du Castel 2009 Petit Castel Judean Hills (\$50) 92** A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot, the 2009 Petit Castel is a fresh youthful wine showing a medium ruby hue and lots of red fruit and spice on the nose. Aged for 16 months in French oak, it is well structured with delicious red and black fruit flavors on the palate and a good amount of tannic grip at this stage of development. It will drink best after a year or two in the bottle.

Domaine Netofa (K) Located in the Galilee near Kerem ben Zimar, this winery is operated by Pierre Miodovnick, former head winemaker for Royal Wine Europe. Born and raised in the Languedoc in South West France, Pierre now resides in Israel and is producing these very good wines. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Domaine Netofa White Galilee (\$25) 88 The Netofa White is made of 100% Chenin Blanc. It has a very pleasant

floral nose with aromas and flavors of pineapple and stone fruit. It is soft and perfumed with moderate acidity and freshness and a delicious finish. **Domaine Netofa 2010 Red Galilee (\$25) 86** The red is a blend of Syrah and Mourvedre from Netofa's own vineyards. It is a ripe and fruit forward, tank-fermented wine, offering grape-like aromas and flavors of black and red fruit. It is fresh light, and easy drinking but has little complexity and a short finish. **Domaine Netofa 2009 La Tour Red (\$45) 92** The La Tour Red is also a blend of Syrah and Mourvedre but a big step up in quality from the Red. It is a rich and flavorful wine, smoky, elegant, and refined. It is beautifully balanced with lots of layers of secondary flavors and is long lasting on the palate with excellent balance and purity.

Ella Valley Vineyards (K) Ella Valley is a mid-sized winery located on the Kibbutz Netiv Halamed in the Judean Hills. It planted its first vineyards in 1997 and today owns three vineyards totaling 200 acres, of which 1/3 is used for its own wines and the rest sold to others. Ella Valley's current winemaker, Lynn Gold, graduated from U. of Adelaide enology program and took charge from the 2011 vintage. The winery produces 15,000 cases of high quality estate bottled wines annually. Ella Valley follows rigorous vineyard management and winemaking practices. The wines produced under its Vineyard Choice label are outstanding. **Importer:** Monsieur Touton Selections, New York, NY, Victor Kosher Wines, Hollywood, FL and Wine Appellations, Mill Valley, CA

Ella Valley Vineyards 2010 Chardonnay Estate Judean Hills (\$23) 88 This wine is hand picked at night from Aderet & Neshorim vineyards. It spends 11 months in French oak (70% barrel fermented and sur lie). It is fairly mineral yet ripe with apple fruit, nice leesy notes, and very subtle malolactic fermentation. A very solid, appealing and lively Chardonnay that has good weight and freshness for this warm year. **Ella Valley Vineyards 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$27) 91** This Cabernet Sauvignon is a complex earthy wine exhibiting black currant fruit with hints of black cherry, cedar and spice. It has a soft attack with good structure and balance, round tannins, and a solid finish. This wine is tight immediately out of the bottle so give it time to breathe after opening it. **Ella Valley Vineyards 2006 Merlot Judean Hills (\$27) 90** The 2006 Merlot exhibits a dark ruby color and has rich aromas of black cherry and plum that are mirrored on the palate. Soft and velvet in texture, it provides rich sweet and spicy dark berry fruit, soft round tannins, and a long lush finish. **A great wine.** **Ella Valley Vineyards 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Vineyard Choice Judean Hills (\$39) 93** The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon displays an opaque ruby color

and aromas of ripe black cherry, cassis and toast. It has a soft attack, a velvet texture and supple ripe fruit flavors. The tannins are silky smooth and the finish is persistent and fruit rich. Another great wine in this series. **Ella Valley Vineyards 2004 Merlot Vineyard Choice Judean Hills (\$35) 93** The 2004 Merlot Vineyard's Choice blends 85% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. It has an opaque ruby color and offers up savory aromas of red and black fruit, leather, roasted meat and earth. Aged for 17 months in French oak, it is a complex and layered wine that would show very well in a Pomerol blind tasting. A superb wine for earthy dishes combining game, braised meat, mushrooms, and truffles finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Ella Valley Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay Judean Hills 90. Ella Valley Vineyards 2004 Syrah Judean Hills (\$29) 90

Flam (K) Located in the foothills of the Jerusalem Mountains, Flam has been a consistent producer of high quality wines since its first releases in 1998. The winery was first established by brothers Golan and Gilad Flam, and the wines today are produced in a state-of-the-art winery with a helpful hand in the vineyards from their father, Israel Flam. Converting to kosher in 2010, Flam specializes in single varietal wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The Reserve and Superiore wines are their top of the line, age worthy bottlings. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Flam 2010 Blanc Judean Hills (\$35) 89 The 2010 Blanc is a blend of 67% Sauvignon Blanc and 33% Chardonnay. It offers fresh and fragrant aromas of melon and orchard fruit followed by crisp mouth filling fruit on the palate. It is un-oaked but has excellent texture and acidity that extends through to a delightful finish. **Flam 2010 Rosé Judean Hills (\$35) 88+** This delicious dry rosé is made of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The grapes were picked at high acid levels and fermented in stainless steel with several hours of skin contact. The wine exhibits a deep salmon color and is crisp on the palate with flavors of fresh raspberries and just enough acidity to make it refreshing without too much zest. **Well done. Flam 2010 Classico Judean Hills (\$35) 89** The Classico is a blend of Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petite Verdot that spends 10 months in new and second year French oak. It offers aromas of ripe blackberry fruit and cedar on the nose that is mirrored on the palate. It has a soft attack with velvet mouth feel, rounded tannins, and a long finish. Its excellent balance makes it pleasant and easy drinking. **Flam 2009 Superiore Syrah Galilee 88+** This Syrah is sourced from mature but not old vines at two sites: Ben Zimra at 700 m (basalt soil)

and Kedesh Valley at 480 m (terra rossa soil). It exhibits a medium intense ruby, with a lovely fresh violet-floral bouquet enhanced by some coconut oak notes (1/3 new French oak). It has elegant fruit flavors in a lighter northern Rhone style, not too gamy but with fine tannins and persistent red currant and anise continue to the finish. This is a stylish wine in a lighter Crozes Hermitage vein. **Flam 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Upper Galilee 88** Blended with a little Petit Verdot and Merlot (7%), this Cabernet Sauvignon was sourced from grapes on Terra Rossa at Kedesh Valley and spent 18 months in French oak. It has a medium-plus ruby color and an oak-vanilla veneer over solid black fruit and light anise aromas. Its flavors are similar, with a medium body, fine tannins and a fairly refined fruit/alcohol balance. It can benefit from 3-5 years of aging.

Galil Mountain Winery (K) Located on Kibbutz Yiron in the Upper Galilee, this winery is a joint venture between Golan Heights Winery and Kibbutz Yiron, which has outstanding vineyards in the Upper Galilee. The winery produces single varietal and a top premium blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot called Yiron. The winery produces around 75,000 cases annually. Micha Vaadia is the young talented winemaker at Galil Mountain. Micha has a degree in Enology from UC Davis and winemaking experience in California, New Zealand, and Argentina. **Importer:** Yarden Inc. www.yardenwines.com

Galil Mountain 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$17) 89+ The Galil Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon is highly aromatic with aromas of blackberry and cassis. It is soft and round on the palate with ripe and peppery black fruit flavors, good balance and concentration. A lovely easy drinking wine. **Galil Mountain 2009 Viognier Galilee (\$14) 88** This Viognier is ripe and fruity in style, It reveals aromas of fresh peach on the nose and concentrated ripe tropical and orchard fruit flavors on the palate. It has good mouth feel, moderate intensity and a pleasant finish. **Galil Mountain 2007 Yiron Galilee (\$22) 91** Yiron is a delicious light-bodied blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. It is elegant on the attack and on the palate offering red and black fruit flavors with good concentration and balance, round tannins and a persistent finish.

Gamla (K) Named after the ancient city in the Golan Heights, Gamla is a series of single varietal wines of excellent value for the money. The wines include a Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay. With the 2009 vintage Gamla became a negociant brand made under the direction of the legendary Californian winemaker Peter Stern from grapes sourced from Upper Galilee vineyards. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp. Bayonne, NJ

Gamla 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$21)

89 This Cabernet Sauvignon offers attractive aromas of black currants and blackberry fruit with vanilla and cedar. It is straight forward and easy drinking with pleasant fruit flavors on the palate, good balance, round tannins and a firm finish. **Gamla 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Galilee (\$21) 89+** Aromatic and fragrant on the nose, the 2010 Chardonnay displays clean and crisp melon fruit, excellent acidity and freshness, and light toasted oak. It is beautifully balanced and flavorful with a pleasant easy drinking finish. **Gamla 2010 Merlot Galilee (\$21) 90** This opaque ruby purple Merlot is fruit forward with good plum and dark cherry aromas. It is lush and flavorful on the palate with nicely integrated toasted oak, soft round tannins, excellent balance and a lovely persistent finish.

Golan Heights Winery (K) Established in 1983, the Golan Heights Winery is today one of Israel's largest commercial wineries and one of its finest. The winery sources its grapes from 17 vineyards in an area of 600 hectares (1,500 acres) in the Golan Heights and the Upper Galilee. The Golan Heights Winery produces around 450,000 cases annually at a state-of-the-art facility located in Katzrin. Victor Schoenfeld, a twenty-year veteran, directs winemaking and is assisted by a team of five winemakers and several international consultants. The winery has three brands in the U.S. market: Yarden, Golan and Gilgal. Yarden is the winery's flagship series and is of the highest quality and the best known internationally. **Importer:** Yarden, Inc., New York, NY

Yarden White Wines: Golan Heights Winery 2011 Yarden Sauvignon Blanc Golan Heights (\$15) 91 This Sauvignon Blanc displays a medium yellow-green gold color with complex aromas of melon, herbs, light vanilla, some surlie nuttiness and definite capsicum peppery notes. It is juicy and fresh on the palate with very good acidity and freshness. Generous in style and intensely flavored, it is one of the finest Sauvignon Blancs for this report. **Golan Heights Winery Yarden 2010 Chardonnay Odem Vineyard Galilee (\$20) 89** The Chardonnay Odem Vineyard exhibits a golden color with light tropical fruit flavors. Barrel

fermented (70% new oak), it reveals good constraint in the use of oak. The palate is nice and creamy with notes of pear, lemon and smoke and good acidity. **Yarden Red Wines Golan Heights Winery Yarden 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$26) 91** The Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits pure black currant fruit and cassis on the nose with light vanilla oak and hints of earth. It is flavorful and layered on the palate with good fruit concentration and balance and nicely integrated oak. It is round in the mouth with firm tannins and a long finish. **Golan Heights Winery 2008 Yarden 2T Golan Heights 91** The Yarden 2T is a blend of Touriga Nacional and Tinta Cao, aged 18 months in 40% new French oak. Opaque ruby-purple, it offers strong dark plum, mineral and anise aromas, with a little oak vanilla evident. It is very rich and solid, almost saline on the palate, with extract. It has fine firm tannins, rich bitter chocolate and leather flavors with good acidity. Very classy and focused and should age well 5-7 years. **An exciting wine! Golan Heights Winery 2008 Syrah Tel Phares Vineyard Golan Heights 89.** Opaque black ruby in color, the Syrah Tel Phares displays rich deep black fruit, graphite and spice aromas, with some oak evident but not dominant. Alcohol only sneaks into the picture on the finish. Aged for 18 months in French oak, there are loads of fresh berries, fine tannins and solid extract, with a full-bodied texture, and just slight shortness from alcohol on the finish. Very good, distinctive wine needing 4-5 years for maximum pleasure. **Golan Heights Winery 2008 Yarden Rom Golan Heights 93+** This is a superb proprietary red blend developed in collaboration with consultant Zelma Long. Opaque black ruby in color, the wine offers fragrant black berry, coffee, bell pepper, and cassis-violet fragrances on the nose. Aged for 18 months in 66% new French oak, it reveals elegant, filigreed Cabernet fruit flavors, with polished, soave tannins, oak spice, and a rich texture with beautiful harmony between all of the elements. Not done in a Mèdoc style like the Chateau Castel but equally well delineated and exciting.

Yarden Dessert Wines: Golan Heights Winery 2009 Yarden Heights Wine, Late Harvest Gewürztraminer 375ml 91 This 'Vin de glacière' has a yellow-gold color with slight volatile acidity on the nose which is fleshed out by rich, honeyed, apricot aromas. Rich, sweet, luscious flavors are mated to firm acidity, including some evident VA that adds a cider note. A delicious Israeli ice wine sourced from healthy grapes which are chilled until frozen (-12°C) over a month, then crushed and pressed. About 20% RS with good acidity on the finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Golan Heights Winery 2010 Yarden Gewürztraminer Golan Heights 88 Golan Heights Winery Yarden 2006 Syrah Galilee (\$22) 89+ Golan Heights Winery 2008 Yarden Pinot Noir Golan Heights 88 Golan Heights Winery 2008 Yarden Merlot Golan Heights 88

Hevron Heights (K) This winery is located near the city of Hebron. It was established in 2001 by French investors. It is a modern winery built on a French model. The winemaker is Jacques Humeau, a graduate of the Enology department of the University of Bordeaux. The wines are mainly sourced from the Judean Hills and are fruit forward, well-balanced, and are competently made. Their top tier of their wines can be quite good.
Importer: Happy Hearts Wine, Brooklyn, NY

Hevron Heights Winery 2007 Makhpelah Judean Hills (\$60) 87 The Makhpelah is a blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Merlot that is sourced from high altitude vineyards in the Judean Hills. It is a big earthy wine with bold blackberry fruit flavors and hints of herbs and minerals. Aged for 24 months in French oak, it offers dry firm tannins on the finish. **Hevron Heights Winery 2007 Pardess Merlot Judean Hills (\$30) 87** The Pardess Merlot offers a dark ruby color and aromas of spicy ripe plum. It is soft on the attack with a chalky mouth feel and good flavor on the palate. Aged in oak for 18 months, the wine shows dry tannins and good intensity on the finish. **Hevron Heights Winery 2007 Reserve (\$80) 90** The Reserve is a delicious blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot and 10% Shiraz. It offers fragrant aromas of black and red berry fruit, toasted oak and vanilla. Aged in French oak for 24 months, it is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with concentrated flavors of raspberry, plum and hints of cedar. It has very soft round tannins on the finish and can be consumed now and over the next two to three years. **Hevron Heights Winery 2005 Mount Hevron Reserve Cabernet Judean Hills (\$43) 88** This Reserve Cabernet displays a savory nose of roasted meat, herbs, black currants, and licorice. Aged for 20 months in oak, it is soft on the attack with good intensity of flavors. It is lush in the mouth with a soft texture and firm finish. **Hevron Heights Winery 2004 Mount Hevron Reserve Syrah Judean Hills (\$53) 90** The Reserve Syrah shows lean ripe black fruit and white pepper on the nose. It is refined on the palate with good structure and balance. Aged for 20 months in new French and American oak, it has round tannins and a firm finish.

Margalit (NK) Founded in 1989, Margalit is among the first boutique wineries established in Israel. Located in the foothills of Mt. Carmel, Margalit is run by the father and son team of Ya'ir and Asaf Margalit. It is known for its Bordeaux-style reds, which are released in a regular and reserve series. **No U.S. Importer.**

Margalit 2009 Enigma Galilee 89 The Enigma is a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, and 18% Cabernet Franc. Medium ruby-garnet in color, it reveals strong vanilla-oak cherry that is immediately evident but also some lovely currant and floral scents with a touch of game and cedar. It is generous, supple and fruity on the palate, with fine tannins and integrated oak and a clean and lengthy finish. It shows a delicate Mèdoc-like bouquet, but deeper fruit and a fine texture suggest it will age quite well for four to six years. **Margalit 2008 Cabernet**

Sauvignon Kadita Single Vineyard Galilee 88 This single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon with 10% Merlot is aged in 90% French oak, 33% of which is new. Medium ruby in color with a hint of garnet at the rim, the wine displays a distinctive, Bordeaux-like mineral-tobac (dried tobacco/herbs) bouquet, but riper, with a touch of balsamic. Medium bodied, it offers black cherry and blackberry fruit on the palate with some chalky tannins and a subtle cassis-cedar finish. This is an attractive bottling for early drinking. **Margalit 2007 Cabernet Franc Galilee 90** Medium dark ruby, this Cabernet Franc shows a fine floral-violet, herbal-peppercorn bouquet with a dash of graphite. Medium bodied, it has fine harmonious fruit with just a touch of volatile acidity to lift the flavors, while also revealing some chalky tannins and a "Right Bank" dustiness. It has a solid and gamy finish, very stylish though quite different and less fruit-driven than most other Cabernet Francs in Israel.

Miles Winery. (NK) This tiny family winery was founded in 2001 by Eyal Miles on Moshav Kerem Ben Zimra in the Upper Galilee. It has its own vineyards planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and white varieties. Production is about 7,000 bottles. The two wines reviewed here are excellent. **No U.S. importer**

Miles Winery 2009 Shiraz Reserve Upper Galilee 90 This bottling displays a full, ruby-violet color with deep blackberry and boysenberry aromas. It has soft yet elegant fruit flavors and is medium-bodied. Aged for 18 months in American and French oak (20% new), the wine is quite fresh and engaging while still being full-flavored. Drink over the next 3-5 years. **Miles Winery 2001 "Port" Red Upper Galilee 90** The 2001 Red displays a full ruby-violet color with deep blackberry and boysenberry aromas. It is soft and rich yet elegant with fruit flavors. Medium-bodied, it reveals a supple, almost Barossa-like sweetness, but without prunes, high oak and alcohol! Quite fresh and engaging while still being full-flavored. Drink over the next three to five years.

MONY Vineyards (K) This operation is located in the Judean foothills where owner Shakiv Artual has had vineyards since the 1980s. The winery was founded in 2002 in honor of his son, Mony, who died prematurely. It is situated on the grounds of a monastery, where Canadian winemaker Sam Sorka produces the wines. The wines are well made; they also produce excellent olives and olive oil. **Importer:** Happy Hearts Wines, Brooklyn, NY

Mony 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Judean Hills (\$21) 88 Blended with 15% Semillon, this Chardonnay reveals a light, fresh apple-peach and lemon drop bouquet, with some discrete oak and lees elements playing in the background. Aged for six months in French oak with no malolactic fermentation or acid adjustment, it is well-layered and ripe with a creamy finish and good acidity to add crunch to the generous fruit. **Mony 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Judean Hills (\$23) 88** Deep ruby violet in color, this Cabernet Sauvignon offers a layered

bouquet, with black raspberry and light herbal/tea aroma and light oak notes. It is medium-bodied on the palate with nicely integrated fruit and oak, supple ripe tannins and freshening acidity on the finish. Drink over 3-4 years. **Mony 2009 Syrah Judean Hills 87** This Syrah is made in a Northern Rhone style from a mature vineyard. Deep ruby in color, it is somewhat resin-like with dried herbs and a garrigue nose. It is fruity on the palate with good berry-licorice flavors, a touch of meatiness, broad minerality and fine tannins on the finish.

Na'aman Winery (NK) This winery was founded in 2004 by Rami and Bettina Na'aman in the small village of Ramat Naftali in the Upper Galilee. The winery is located in an under ground building with nearby vineyards and a plot on the slopes of Mt. Yachmor at 420 meters. The vineyards are planted with Bordeaux varieties and Shiraz. Rami Na'aman is a film director and scriptwriter, in addition to working as a high-tech manager. He studied enology at Sorequ Winery and qualified as a Cellar Master at Tel Hai College. **No U.S. Importer**

Na'aman Winery 2009 "Deep Purple" Dishon Upper Galilee 89 The "Deep Purple" is a blend of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, 20% Merlot and 10% Petit Verdot. Dark ruby-black in color, it offers a strong bouquet of dried tobacco, gravel and olive tapenade. It has full, dense dark berry and mineral flavors with a very focused, rich structure. Aged for about 14 months in French oak, it reveals firm tannins and anise flavors enliven the long finish. A youthful yet substantial wine.

Na'aman Winery 2009 Cabernet Franc Kedesh Valley, Galilee 88 This Cabernet Franc has a medium dark ruby color with a lightly gamy/graphite varietal bouquet. Medium full-bodied, it reveals a typical chewy, firm structure with fine grained tannins, Bordeaux-like cedar graphite dark fruit flavors, with good length and a St Emilion-like personality. Can keep 4-6 years. **Na'aman Winery 2009 Petit Verdot Kedesh Valley Upper Galilee 88** Opaque black-ruby in color, the Petit Verdot exhibits a rich inviting violet, mineral (graphite) classic licorice bouquet. Medium bodied, it offers dense cedar, graphite and blackberry flavors, firm tannins and excellent mid-palate potency with very good length. It also shows real precision regarding varietal character and should keep 5-7 years.

Or Haganuz Winery (K) This winery was founded in 2005 in the Upper Galilee in the foothills of Mt. Mermon. It is owned and operated by ultra orthodox Jews. Its Har Sinai port-like wine is well made and attractive. **Importer:** Happy Hearts Wine, Brooklyn, NY

Or Haganuz Winery 2010 Elima Galilee (\$30) 87+ The Elima is a blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Cabernet Franc. It has an opaque ruby purple color and aromas of earth, minerals, and graphite. It is rustic in character showing black currant fruit with good flavor intensity, a soft texture, firm tannins and a long finish. (no sulfites) **Or Haganuz Winery 2009 Har Sinai Galilee (\$40)**

90 This is a delicious port-like wine of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot. It has an opaque ruby color and a soft lush palate. It offers flavors of ripe red and black fruit and chocolate and a dense, unctuous mouth feel that is both rich and flavorful with good acidity and balance. A great after dinner wine. The grapes are initially frozen for three days to concentrate sugars, then heated over olive wood planks and placed in barrels in direct sun for 14 months.

Odem Mountain Winery (K) This winery, the most northern in Israel, is located in a modern facility on Moshave Odem in the Golan Heights. The grapes for its wines are sourced from its high altitude Alma Vineyard in the Galilee. The winery was founded in 2003 by the Alfasi family. Odem Mountain Winery produces excellent quality wines at all levels. **Importer:** Happy Hearts Winery, Brooklyn, New York

Odem Mountain Winery 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$50) 91 The Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve offers lovely aromas of ripe black currants and cassia. It has a soft lush attack and nicely concentrated black fruit flavors with light cedar and vanilla. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it exhibits excellent balance, good acidity and a long finish. **Odem Mountain Winery 2007 Merlot Reserve Galilee (\$50) 90** The Merlot exhibits a dark ruby color and has aromas of ripe dark berry fruit, earth, minerals, spice, and bitter chocolate. Aged in French oak for 18 months, it boasts bold and lush fruit flavors and hints of cinnamon on the palate. It has good concentration, a round mouth feel, firm tannins, and a long finish. **Odem Mountain Winery 2007 Alfasi Galilee (\$50) 90** The Alfasi is a proprietary blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot. It is medium dark ruby in color and offers aromas of spicy black cherry and earth notes. Aged in oak for 24 months, it is soft on the attack with concentrated red and black fruit on the palate with touches of mint and vanilla. It has soft round tannins, good acidity and a long finish. **Odem Mountain Winery 2007 Syrah Reserve Galilee (\$50) 88** The Syrah Reserve offers aromas of raspberry, dark cherry and oak aromas that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 18 months in oak, it reveals a soft and round mouth feel and is nicely balanced, with firm tannins on the finish. **Odem Mountain Winery 2007 Port Scarlet Galilee (\$60) 88** This Port is produced from 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot. It exhibits a dark ruby color with flavors of dark fruit, orange peel and clove. In the mouth it offers light viscosity with flavors of sweet fruit and alcohol (18.5% alc).

Pelter (NK) This excellent winery was established in 2002 on the Golan Heights by Tal Pelter. Tal studied oenology and worked at several wineries in Australia. The winery sources Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and other grapes from the Golan Heights, Upper Galilee and Jerusalem Mountains. Pelter is among a handful of wineries in Israel that also produce sparkling wine. Pelter and T-Selection are the winery's two labels. The winery produces about 82,000 bottles annually. **No U.S. importer**

Pelter 2008 Cabernet Franc T-Selection Golan Heights

Golan Heights 88 The Cabernet Franc T-Selection reveals a violet-ruby color and has a light floral bouquet of tea and black fruit. It is made in a delicate Loire style, except for the oak, which adds a slightly herbal vanilla note to the finish. It is medium bodied and quite stylish, with just a touch of dryness on the finish that cuts it short. **Pelter**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Golan Heights 91 Medium deep ruby, this 100% Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a dark cassis-berry nose with sweet oak spice and a touch of tapenade. Aged for 20 months in French oak, it has focused, intense and balanced tannins, with a lovely berry finish and balanced alcohol. It also has very sweet berry flavors, and an elegant finish in a New World style; it's very distinctive for its minerality on the back palate. Should age well 4-5 years. **Pelter 2007 Cabernet-Shiraz Golan**

Heights /Jerusalem Hills 90 A 50-50 blend of the two varieties from the respective areas, this bottling exhibits a deep black-purple hue from the Jerusalem Hills Syrah. It has a bouquet of bright black raspberry, light graphite, anise and black peppercorn. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it is medium-bodied with rich berry fruit and some black fig and dark chocolate notes. It has a fine tannic backbone with the alcohol reasonably well balanced and integrated with the fruit. **Pelter 2011 Gewurztraminer Kadesh Valley**

Galilee 88 This Gewurztraminer had been just bottled when tasted but was very expressive already! It is quite spicy with pepper and rose aromas and a hint of perfume. It also has ripe, mouth coating flavors, with medium+ acidity, just off-dry, with very balanced yet intense flavors that are zesty and juicy at the same time. Done in a delicious aperitif style. **Pelter 2008 Shiraz-Grenache T-Selection**

Golan Heights 88 This is a blend of 60% Shiraz and 40% Grenache and spends 14 months in French oak. Medium ruby-violet in color, it has spicy, blackberry/anise aromas with a hint of orange and cooked strawberry. It is medium full-bodied with generous round flavors and low tannins but good acidity to maintain a balanced, forward freshness. Very good and drinkable now.

Psagot (K) This winery is located in the northern Judean Hills. It was established by Na'ama and Yaakov Berg in 1998. Yaakov Berg serves as winemaker and has a well-earned reputation for producing concentrated and elegant black fruited wines. Annual production is about 7,500 cases. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Psagot 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$30) 91 The 2009 Psagot exhibits an opaque ruby purple color and aromas of black currants, black cherry and toasted oak. Aged in French barriques for 13 months, it reveals rich and concentrated black fruit and earth flavors on the palate with spicy notes. The wine is nicely balanced and structured with soft round tannins and a persistent finish. It is drinkable now but will be even better in a year or two and looks to have good aging potential. **Psagot 2009 Edom**

Judean Hills (\$35) 92+ Edom is composed of 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc, 15% Petit Verdot and 7% Merlot. Opaque ruby in color, it is aged for 14 months

in French oak barrels and has attractive aromas of pure black currant and red berry fruit with vanilla and sweet oak notes. On the attack it is soft with a velvet smooth mouth feel, and reveals an elegant and restrained palate with silky tannins. This is a gorgeous wine that tastes terrific now and will improve in the bottle. **Psagot 2006 Merlot**

Judean Hills (\$25) 91 This Merlot exhibits a lovely medium ruby color with aromas of plum, black cherry, and lightly charred oak. It has a flavorful palate with nicely concentrated red and black fruit that is beautifully balanced with notes of tobacco and smoke. The tannins are round, and the finish is long and persistent. ***Delicious.***

Ramot Naftaly Winery (K) Founded in 2003 by Yitzchak Cohen, this boutique winery is located on the Moshav Ramot Naftaly in the Kedesh Valley in the Upper Galilee. Its vineyards total a little less than 5 acres and are planted with Barbera, Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Petit Verdot and Merlot. Yitzchak initially produced his wines with the assistance of Tal Pelter of Pelter Winery. However, he later learned winemaking at the Cellar Master Program at Tel-Chai College in Israel. His daughter, a trained enologist at Hebrew University, assists with the winemaking. This father-daughter winemaking team is producing some outstanding wines. Yitzchak Cohen was the first to produce Barbera in Israel in 2005. ***No U.S. importer.***

Ramot Naftaly 2007 Barbera Kadesh Valley Galilee 90

The 2007 Barbera has a medium deep ruby hue and ripe cherry and spicy berry/vanilla aromas and flavors. Aged for ten months in French oak, it shows good freshness, medium-high acidity, low tannins and pure flavors. This is textbook Barbera! A very agreeable wine. **Ramot Naftaly**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Kadesh Valley 91 Full violet-ruby in color, this Cabernet Sauvignon has a wonderfully rich, nuanced bouquet of tapenade, black fruits including plum and discrete smoky-oak notes. Aged for 12 months in oak, it's medium-bodied with full, velvet-sweet black cherry and olive flavors, fine-textured tannins and real finesse on the balanced, lightly oak-enriched finish. Lovely wine for drinking over the next five years. **Ramot**

Naftaly 2009 Shiraz Kadesh Valley Galilee 89 Dark ruby-violet. This Shiraz offers a slight note of tapenade in the nose along with the more usual blackberry and meaty/mocha scents. Medium bodied, there's a lot of ripe berry and licorice fruit, mingled with cassis flavors. Violet aromas come on with air, and the wine has silky tannins. Stylish, rich yet soave flavors belie its youthful vitality. Drinks fine now, but will keep well for three to five years. **Ramot**

Naftaly 2008 Shiraz Cabernet Kadesh Valley Galilee 88 Medium violet-purple. Floral berry and violet scents with delicate oak-vanilla notes are offered up front. Medium-bodied, the wine shows a very good berry fruit center and fine, elegant flavors. Aged for 18 months in oak, half barriques, half botti it reveals soft tannins, and a sweet, spicy black pepper and cherry-filled finish. Drink over the next three years.

Recanati (K) Founded in 2000 by Lenny Recanati and a group of investors, the Recanati Winery is producing some of Israel's finest premium wines. Most of the vineyards from which the winery sources its grapes, such as Kibbutz Manara and Moshave Kerem Ben Zimra, are located in the Upper Galilee. Recanati also sources grapes from growers in the Ella Valley and the Lower Galilee for some warmer climate varieties. And it has vineyards in the Judean Hills where it grows Merlot. Winemaking at Recanati is under the direction of UC Davis grad, Gil Shatzberg, formerly of Amphorae and Carmel wineries. Shatzberg moved to Recanati in 2008 to replace former senior winemaker Lewis Pasco. **Importer:** Palm Bay Imports Syosset, NY

Diamond Series: Recanati 2009 Diamond Sauvignon Blanc Galilee (\$13) 87

This wine is sourced from vineyards in Israel's coastal plain region, a good site for Sauvignon Blanc. It is pale straw in color and exhibits aromas of apple and honey on the nose. It is medium-bodied and ripe tasting on the palate with subtle tropical fruit flavors.

Recanati 2010 Diamond Chardonnay Galilee (\$17) 88

The yellow gold Chardonnay has a perfumed nose of melon and pear fruit, herbs and minerals. On the palate it is light and leesy, nicely balanced with good acidity and a firm finish.

Recanati 2010 Diamond Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee (\$17) 88

The Cabernet Sauvignon is dark ruby in color and exhibits aromas of black currant, tobacco and vanilla. Aged for 8 months in French and American oak, it has light fruit flavors on the palate, firm tannins and a flavorful finish.

Recanati 2010 Shiraz Balilee (\$17) 87+

Medium dark ruby. This Shiraz has a peppered nose with reductive notes. It reveals high acidity and spiciness on the palate with moderate fruit, herbs and a short finish.

Reserve Series: Recanati 2007 Merlot Reserve Single Vineyard Galilee (\$25) 91

Recanati's Merlot Reserve Single Vineyard has a medium ruby hue and aromas of pure ripe plum and spice. On the palate it reveals rich flavors of plum, blackberry, cassis, and vanilla. Aged for 16 months in French oak, the wine is rich in flavors with good structure and balance and round firm tannins. The finish is magnificent, long and persistent and full of fruit. Great wine from a hillside vineyard.

Recanati 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Galilee (\$27) 89+

The Recanati Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve exhibits an opaque ruby color and a nose of cassis, black currant and cedar. Aged for 16 months in French oak barriques, it is soft and velvet smooth with considerable oak on the palate, round tannins and a long finish. Sourced from high altitude vineyards in the Galilee.

Recanati 2007 Special Reserve Galilee (\$48) 91

A blend of 92% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Merlot, the Special Reserve is a rich tasting wine revealing ripe blackcurrant, plum and cassis aromas on the nose. On the full-bodied palate it is soft and lush with terrific mouth feel, round lightly gripping tannins and a persistent finish.

Recanati 2010 Special Reserve Galilee White (\$34) 90

This white blend is Chardonnay mostly, with Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc, aged in new oak after fermenting in stainless

steel. Matured sur lie for 6-8 months, with about 20-30% malo. The wine shows stony flavors, a bit nutty, with hints of herbs and green tree fruit (greengage plum), along with white peach and elegant leesy notes. It has good acidity, a rich mid-palate, and a lingering, zesty finish.

Recanati 2009 Wild Carigan Reserve Judean Hills (\$56) 92

Opaque ruby purple. Sourced from dry farmed, head-trained, low yielding old vines from a unique 30 year old, chalk soiled vineyard near Beit Shemeshy in the Judean Hills. It offers aromas of minerals, plum and boysenberry and has a soft and lush palate of pepper and dark fruit flavors, rich, concentrated, and liqueur-like. It's delicious with soft round tannins and a long persistent finish. Easily, one of the finest Carigans produced in Israel.

Other Wines Reviewed : Recanati 2010/2011 Rosé Upper Galilee 91 Recanati 2010 Shiraz Galilee 88 Recanati 2009 Syrah-Viognier Reserve Galilee 90 Recanati 2010 Reserve Petite Sirah-Zinfandel Jezreel Valley 91

Saslove Winery (K) This family winery was founded on Kibbutz Eyal in 1998 by Barry Saslove. Barry was born and raised in Ottawa, Canada and moved to Israel in the late 1960s.

Saslove Winery also has a winemaking facility in the Upper Galilee on Kibbutz Tzuriel which is located near the winery's 30 acres of vineyards. Barry Saslove makes the wines with assistance from his wife and daughters. Barry, himself is also a wine educator and conducts high-level winemaking courses for other winemakers in Israel. The Aviv series are young entry level wines, while the Adom series are barrel-aged wines. Production is about 80,000 bottles.

No U.S. Importer

Saslove 2009 Aviv Marriage Red Galilee 87+

The Aviv Marriage is a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. It has bright vanilla-black cherry and tobacco scents that mingle with smoky oak from six months of aging with oak chips. Medium bodied, it reveals firm tannins with an espresso after taste. Its black fruit flavors on the finish are juicy, and the tannin serves to add some needed definition. It needs a couple of years to integrate the oak and fruit.

Saslove 2009 Adom Shiraz Galilee 88

Blended with 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and aged 20 months in French and American oak barrels, this Shiraz has gamey, 'sauvage' loamy aromas, followed by solid dark berry fruit. Medium-bodied, it offers dense cassis, pepper and graphite flavors with lots of ripe berry fruit on the attack and strong tannins on the mid-palate and finish. Cornas meets old vine Barossa Shiraz! This is a wine for those who like a wilder style of Shiraz, given some light Brett notes, but can take 4-6 years aging!

Saslove 2008 Adom Cabernet Sauvignon Galilee 88

This 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, also aged for 20 months in oak, exhibits a full ruby color with deep typical cassis-graphite smoky aromas. Medium-bodied, it offers black cherry flavors with fine tannins and a touch of balsamic on the finish. It has a nicely polished balance for 3-5 years aging.

Saslove Kadita Dessert Wine Galilee (/500ml) 89+

The grapes for this delicious dessert wine are sourced from the organic Kadita Vineyard in the

Upper Galilee. It is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon bottled at the end of 2010 and fortified with grape brandy. It blends grapes from the 2005-2007 vintages inclusive. It has a ruby port-style with strong black cherry/plum aromas, along with raisins, dates and carob. Firmly structured and a little 'grippy', it is medium sweet on the finish (8% RS), with delicious ripe berry flavors. Should age well for up to a decade. 17% alc.

Sea Horse Wines (NK) This boutique winery is located in the village of Bar-Giyora in the heart of the Jerusalem Mountains. Owner and former documentary filmmaker, Se'ev Dunie, serves as winemaker. The winery focuses mainly on Syrah and Zinfandel but also produces a first-class Chenin Blanc, and blends of Carignan, Cabernet and Grenache. The grapes are sourced from Sea Horse's own vineyards situated at about 650 meters and through out Israel. The winery produces 1,500 cases annually. **No U.S. importer**

Sea Horse 2010 "James" Chenin Blanc Gedera (Ashkelon/Shimshon) 91 This lovely Chenin Blanc is sourced from the 36 year-old low-yielding Weiner Vineyard. The wine exhibits classic pear-flint Chenin Blanc aromas that are mirrored on the palate with crisp acidity and excellent fruit density with honey accents. A leesy element adds a fine chalky-mineral texture and the wine finishes with good length and intensity. A wonderfully distinctive wine. **Sea Horse 2009 "Romain" 91** This is a GSM blend, with 62% Grenache, 30% Syrah and 8% Mourvedre. Medium dark ruby-purple, it reveals strong black cherry, grilled meat and pomegranate aromas. Aged for 18 months in New French oak, it is full-bodied, soft and elegant on the palate with some dark red fruit, meaty and chocolate flavors, moderate, ripe tannins and good length. It should be at its peak in three to five years. **Sea Horse 2008 "Lennon" 88** The 2008 Lennon is a blend of 85% Zinfandel, 8% Mourvedre and 7% Petit Sirah. Dark ruby in color it reveals aromas of black cherry and toast. Aged for 16 months in American oak, it offers flavors of black forest cake, licorice and black pepper. Still young, it needs more time in the bottle to come together for peak drinking pleasure. **Sea Horse 2007 "Antoine" 91** The 2007 Antonine is a blend of 76% Syrah, 17% Grenache and 7% Mourvedre. This is a substantial wine, dark ruby in color and offering aromas of ripe red and black fruit that is easy and ready to drink. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it is beautifully balanced and mouth filling with good fruit and oak on the palate and the finish. **Sea Horse 2008 "Antoine" 89** The 2008 Antonine is a blend of 65% Syrah, 18% Grenache and 17% Mourvedre. Aged in French oak for 18 months, it is dark ruby in color and exhibits more oak and dark fruit flavors than the 2007 Antonine. Heavy oak dominates the character of the wine with some lingering bitter notes on the finish.

Segal's Wines (K) This winery, originally called the Zvi Vineyard, was originally established as a family winery in the early 1950s. In 2001 it was purchased by Barkan Wines but kept its name and was permitted to produce wines independently. Avi Feldstein, a former poet, journalist and barman had until recently made the wines at Barkan's facilities on Kibbutz Hulda. The grapes are sourced from vineyards in the Kadesh Valley and elsewhere in the Galilee. The winery produces excellent wines at both the entry and premium levels. Production: one million bottles. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Segal's 2009 Chardonnay Special Reserve Galilee Heights (\$20) 90 This is an excellent Chardonnay that is New World in style. It is bright green gold in color and offers aromas of melon and orchard fruit with nicely integrated oak and vanilla highlights. Produced with partial malo, it shows elegance and balance on the palate with excellent acidity and a firm finish. **Segal's 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Dishon Galilee (\$20) 91** Dark ruby in color, this bottling exhibits peppery black and red fruit, big flavor concentration with good acidity and perfect balance. The wine is crushed in small lots and fermented on the skins for 34 days with gentle pumpovers, followed by aging in French oak for 20 months. This is a big wine in need of time in bottle for a couple of years; it will drink well for 5-10 years. **Segal's 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Special Reserve Galilee Heights (\$20) 90** This Cabernet Sauvignon offers red and black currant fruit and toast on the nose. On the palate it shows purity and focus and is well-balanced with soft tannins and lingering fruit notes and chocolate on the finish. A lovely wine. **Segal's 2006 Merlot Dovev Galilee Heights (\$38) 89** Dark ruby. This single vineyard Merlot offers aromas of spicy black cherry, toasted oak and leather. On the palate it has a soft velvet mouth feel with concentrated black fruit, minerals and spice. Full-bodied, it is well balanced with tannic grip and a long finish.

Shiloh Winery (K) Established in 2005 by entrepreneur Mayer Chomer, Shiloh Winery is situated in the Binyamin region of the Judean Hills. The winery's vineyards are planted with Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah and Barbera. The winemaker is Amichay Luria. Mosaic is its flagship wine. Shiloh is an up and coming winery. Production is around 80,000 bottles. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Shiloh 2009 Chardonnay Judean Hills (\$21) 89 Star bright, green gold. This wine reveals smoky charred oak, slate and minerals on the nose. It offers intense orchard fruit flavors on the palate, good balance and acidity, and a very long finish. **Shiloh 2009 Barbera Judean Hills (\$30) 88** Stylistically, this is an atypical Italian Barbera. It exhibits more ripe black cherry and plum fruit aromas, big flavors, a hint of vanilla, and moderate acidity. Delicious and very agreeable on the long finish. **Shiloh 2009 Merlot Secret Reserve Judean Hills (\$40) 87+** Medium ruby. This 100% Merlot is fresh, fruit forward and flavorful. It reveals light

spicy plum aromas with cedar notes. It has medium plus acidity on the palate with good structure and tannic grip on the finish. **Shiloh 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Secret Reserve Judean Hills (\$40) 87** The dark ruby 100% Cabernet Sauvignon reveals aromas of black currants, lead pencil and cigar box. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it is somewhat dry and light tasting on the palate, straightforward, and easy drinking on the finish. **Shiloh 2009 Shiraz Secret Reserve Judean Hills (\$40) 88** The 100% Shiraz displays ripe plum and cedar aromas that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 20 months in French and American oak casks, it is medium-bodied with light fruit concentration and tannic grip through to the finish. (The wine was made using the latest Mevushal technology.) **Shiloh 2009 Legend Judean Hills (\$40) 88+** The Legend is a blend of 45% Shiraz, 40% Petite Sirah, 9% Petit Verdot and 6% Merlot. Dark purple. It offers aromatic red berry/plum fruit on the nose with toasted oak. It is light on the attack and the palate shows medium plus acidity, moderate fruit intensity, and tannic grip on a long finish. (The wine was also made using the latest Mevushal technology.) **Shiloh 2007 Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$30) 89** This blend offers aromas of black and red fruit and lots of cedar on the nose. It is ripe and lush tasting on the palate with excellent balance and structure. It has ripe round tannins and a long finish. **Shiloh 2006 Mosaic Judean Hills (\$60) 91** Opaque ruby purple. The Mosaic is a delicious Merlot-based Bordeaux blend with a touch of Petit Sirah. It offers dark fruit aromas on the nose with notes of coffee, cacao, cigar box, lead pencil, vanilla and spices. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it has a velvet texture with ripe round tannins and a long finish. Has good aging potential for 3-5 years.

Other Wines Reviewed: Shiloh Port Dessert Wine Judean Hills (\$35) 87+ Shiloh 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Secret Reserve Judean Hills (\$40) 89 Shiloh 2009 Merlot Secret Reserve Judean Hills (\$40) 87+ Shiloh 2006 Merlot Shiraz Judean Hills 90

Shvo Vineyards/Kerem Shvo (NK) This boutique winery located in the Upper Galilee in temporary facilities is owned and operated by the talented Gaby Sadan. Gaby is winemaker here and his vineyard is situated at 800 meters near the winery and planted with Mediterranean varieties such as Grenache and Mourvedre (in Gobelet), as well as Syrah, Barbera and other varieties, which are not widely planted in the Galilee. Gaby follows minimalist winemaking techniques including the use of native yeasts. His first releases were in 2009 and are outstanding. **No importer in the U.S.**

Shvo 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Upper Galilee 88 This is very different than most Sauvignon Blancs, as it has a more nutty Marsanne-like honey character, with a touch of lanolin along with some melon and herbal flavors that are more typical. A bit like a Pessac-Leognan white wine but richer and less fruit-driven. It is whole cluster pressed and fermented in tank and demi-muid. **Shvo 2010 Rosé Barbera Upper Galilee Upper Galilee 92** A rosé de presse, this

rosé reveals a medium pink color and a bright, cherry, slightly gardenia bouquet with hints of nectarine. It has a very crisp, dry palate with a hint of tannin that adds to the depth of flavor, intense fruit and high vitality of the wine. It also has very good length in a bold style like the best Xinomavro rosés of Greece. We expect the 2011 to be even fresher and livelier. **Shvo 2009 Red Blend Upper Galilee 91+** The Red Blend combines 45% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 20% Barbera, and 15% Mourvedre. Dark ruby in color, it is very southern Rhone-like with floral and spicy black cherry and raspberry aromas. It is medium bodied with lovely licorice pastilles and pure black fruit on the front palate, along with nice tannic grip, graphite and ferrous elements with a hint of violet floral scents on the finish. Nicely balanced and structured and capable of aging 6-8 years.

Smadar Winery (NK) This family winery located in Zichron Ya'akov was established by Motti Sela in 1998. It produces wine from nearby vineyards in an area called Ein Toot (mulberry) planted with Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties. Production is currently about 6,000 bottles. The wines reviewed here are excellent. **No importer in U.S.**

Smadar Winery 2007 Old Vine Carignan Zichron Ya'akov 89+ Dark ruby color. This Old Vine Carignan displays a smoky dark plum and dried herbs bouquet. On the palate it has dense and meaty flavors with more plum and some earthy notes. It has a firm yet fine tannin texture and a ripe warm finish. It is ripe but not hot, over ripe or coarse. An excellent Carignan that will benefit from 3-5 years of aging. **Smadar Winery 2008 Ein Toot Red Blend Zichron Ya'akov 88+** The Ein Toot Red Blend combines 30% Malbec, 30% Merlot, and 20% each of Carignan old vines and Petit Verdot. It has a deep violet-black color and dense black fruit, licorice and loam-earth flavors, with cedar and mineral notes. It has excellent structure and balance, classy yet powerful with firm tannins. Should age well 5-7 years.

Tanya Winery (K) This family-owned and operated winery located in the town of Ofra north of Ramallah was established by Yoran Cohen in 2001. Its vineyards are situated in the chalky rocky ground of the Judean Hills at an elevation of 900 meters above sea level and are planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and Chardonnay. Production is 30,000 bottles annually. **Importer:** Red Garden Imports, Brooklyn, NY

Tanya 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Eliya Reserve Jerusalem Hills 88 Medium ruby, with a light garnet rim, this wine reveals pure cassis, herbs and dried tobacco scents on the nose. Medium bodied, it shows fine structure with moderately intense cherry-cassis flavors but in a claret style with elegant, fine tannins and a lingering finish. Drink soon, too. **Tanya 2005 Eliya Reserve Blend Jerusalem Hills 87** This blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Merlot has a dark ruby color and aromas of floral cherry with light herbal notes. It is medium-bodied followed by fairly

mature, cherry, cedar and herb flavors and evolved tannins. Still a little tight on the finish but has good finesse and some minerality. Drink soon.

Tishbi Estate Winery (K) Tishbi is a very large family winery that dates back to 1882. with the financial backing of Baron Edmond de Rothschild. The present generation's great grandparents planted the first modern wine grape vineyards in Israel. After more than a century of grape growing, Jonathan Tishbi founded the Tishbi Estate in 1984 in the town of Binyamina to produce wine. Located near Zichron Yaacov at the foot of Mount Carmel, the Tishbi estate is surrounded by its home vineyards; it also sources grapes from vineyards through out Israel. Golan Tishbi serves as senior winemaker. **Importer:** Admiral Imports, Ceder Grove, NJ

Tishbi Estate 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills & Galilee (\$15) 87+ This Cabernet Sauvignon is blended with small amounts of Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Solid dark ruby in color, it has a plum and ripe cherry bouquet. Medium-bodied, it boasts dark cherry fruit, some mineral and coffee flavors and very good sweetness of finish with excellent ripeness. **Tishbi Estate 2006 Barbera-Zinfandel Special Reserve Upper Galilee (\$120) 91+** This a delicious, eccentric 50-50 fortified blend of Barbera and Zinfandel, sourced from Kfar Uyon on the Lebanese border. Medium dark ruby in hue, the bouquet is at once rich with berry fruit and volatile with a touch of brandy lifting the floral and fruit aromas. Aged 4-5 years in barrel, this bears resemblance to a Banyuls Rancio style rather than Port. The flavors are full bodied with baking spices, dark cherry and some brown sugar notes with a medium-sweet finish. **Great dark chocolate wine!**

Tulip (K) This boutique winery was established in 2003 by the Yitzhaki family in "Kfar Tikva" (a community focused on providing jobs to learning impaired adults) located in Kiryat Tivon near Haifa. The winery which only became kosher in 2010 is committed to producing high quality wines at affordable prices and sources its grapes from vineyards in the Upper Galilee and Judean Hills. Winemaker Tamir Artzi crafts wines that are fruit forward, elegant and easy to drink. The Tulip Reserve and Grand Reserve wines are top of the line. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Tulip 2011 White Tulip Galilee 88 White Tulip is a light straw-colored blend of 70% Gewurztraminer and 30% Sauvignon Blanc. It is pleasantly aromatic and spicy in character with fresh citrus fruit flavors, herbs, good acidity and structure and a crisp finish. **Tulip 2010 Just Cabernet Sauvignon Upper Galilee (\$30) 90** The 2010 Just Cabernet Sauvignon is a delicious wine. Dark ruby in color, it offers black currant fruit and cedar aromas on the nose. Aged for 8 months in French oak barrels, it has a soft texture, elegant mouth feel and soft round tannins. **Tulip 2010 Just Merlot Judean Hills (\$30) 90** The Merlot reveals a dark ruby color and aromas of plum, prominent toasted oak and spice. Aged for 8 months in French oak, it is ripe and

full in the mouth with a soft texture, ripe tannins and a long finish. **Tulip 2007 Mostly Shiraz Upper Galilee (\$26) 91** The Tulip Mostly Shiraz is a delicious blend of Syrah (65%), Cabernet Sauvignon (35%), and Petit Verdot (5%). It has a spicy cedar and blackberry liqueur nose. Aged for 14 months in 50% French and 50% American oak, it offers a lovely palate of blackberry fruit, toast and ripe tannins. Beautifully put together. **Tulip 2007 Syrah Reserve Galilee (\$39) 92** This is a very fruit forward wine boasting aromas and flavors of red berry fruit and oak. It has a soft texture with pure and concentrated fruit flavors on the palate. Nicely balanced, it reveals excellent structure, polished tannins and a persistent finish.

Tzora (K) This winery was founded by the late Ronnie James, a viticulturist, who was dedicated to producing wines which reflect their terroir. Ronnie James passed away in 2008 but prior to his passing brought on board winemaker Eran Pick who has prior winemaking experience in California, Bordeaux and Australia. Tzora wines are made from single vineyards: Shores, Hachalukim, and Neve Ilan. They also produce a Judean Hills blend, sourced from two vineyards, and other cuvees. Tzora wines have been Kosher since 2002 and are high quality. French wine maker Jean Claude Berrouet has been consulting at Tzora since 2010. **Importer:** Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, N.Y.

Tzora 2010 Neve Ilan Chardonnay Judean Hills (\$30) 89 Yellow green gold in color, this Chardonnay offers ripe apple-melon and peach aromas with a distinctive floral note. It is two-thirds barrel fermented with battonage. On the palate it reveals fresh ripe flavors, with zesty ripe apple and a nice touch of creamy, biscuit-like lees on the finish. It is rich but well-balanced with good acidity for such a warm vintage. **Tzora 2006 Judean Hills Judean Hills (\$28) 88** This wine has a slight barnyard/funky nose of dark plum fruit. It is soft on the attack with concentrated plum fruit flavor on the palate. Straightforward overall with a firm finish. **Tzora 2007 Shores Judean Hills (\$39) 91** The 2007 Shores is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (85%) and Syrah (15%) and has a medium ruby hue with aromas of red and black fruit. On the palate it is nicely concentrated with black cherry flavors, pepper and cedar. The wine is nicely balanced with lush soft tannins and a long finish. Would stand up to Israeli salad. **Tzora 2009 Misty Hills Red Judean Hills (\$33) 88** A blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Syrah, this bottling is sourced from the "fossil" block at Shores. It is a northwest-facing vineyard of limestone red-oxide and is loaded with fossilized sea-worm shells. Medium dark ruby, the wine exhibits a strong graphite and blackberry nose with a touch of balsamic lifting the fruit. Showing elegant and polished flavors, it reveals fine tannins, rich mid-palate fruit and an inviting texture. Will benefit from 2-3 years aging.

Tzuba (K) Founded by Moti Tzamir on Kibbutz Tzuba in the Judean Hills, this winery released its first wines in 2005. The wines are currently made by South African-born Paul Dubb. The grapes are sourced from the kibbutz's own vineyards. The four wines reviewed here are competently made. 30,000+ bottles produced.
Importer: Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Tzuba 2009 Chardonnay Judean Hills (\$30) 88 Tzuba's 2009 Chardonnay is straw-colored and offers tropical fruit aromas on the nose. It has a soft creamy palate with ripe fruit flavors, good concentration and balance. It has lovely fruit with good acidity and is light on the finish. **Tzuba 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$30) 89+** This Cabernet Sauvignon is made with a small amount of Petit Verdot. It is medium ruby in color and reveals lovely aromas and flavors of black currant, toasted oak, and spice. It is well structured, light on the mid-palate with good acidity and firm round tannins. **Tzuba 2006 Merlot Judean Hills (\$30) 87** Tzuba's Merlot has a medium ruby color and aromas of cherry, plum and earth. Aged for 14 months in oak, it is soft on the attack but rustic tasting on the palate with spicy red fruit and earthy flavors, high acidity and hard tannins on the finish. **Tzuba 2006 Metsuda Reserve Judean Hills (\$35) 91** Metsuda is a blend of 75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged for 24 months in French oak barriques, it displays a medium ruby hue and aromas of spicy red berries, herbs and toasted oak. It is soft and elegant on the palate and shows good red fruit flavors, charred oak, earth and tobacco. It has good balance and structure and a persistent finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: **Tzuba 2008 Metsuda Judean Hills 88+** **Tzuba 2008 Merlot Judean Hills 87**

Vitkin Wines (NK) Located in the central Coastal Plain, Vitkin was established in 2001 by Doron and Sharon Belogolovsky on Moshav Kfar. The winery produces original premium wines from lesser known grapes such as Johannesburg Riesling, Viognier, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, and Petite Sirah. The wines are sourced from vineyards all over the country and are crafted by the talented winemaker Asaf Paz who also helps make the wines at Binyamina. The wines produced here are exciting and high quality. **No US Importer.**

Vitkin 2009 Riesling Judean Hills 90 This Riesling exhibits a classic citrus bouquet that is mirrored on a zesty palate of yellow fruit and apple flavors with a steely-chalk texture (no skin contact though). It is precise, focused, and beginning to evolve with more rounded notes on the finish. Among the best Rieslings in Israel. **Vitkin 2010 Pinot Noir Judean Hills 88** Medium ruby-colored, the 2010 Pinot Noir offers pretty light roasted cherry and rose aromas with a touch of vanilla oak. Medium bodied, it has fine cherry flavors and a touch of acidity with mild tannins. A very pretty, delicately styled Pinot Noir sourced from the same vineyard as the Riesling. **Vitkin 2008 Cabernet Franc Judean Hills and Shomron 88** Dark ruby in color, this

Cabernet Franc is blended with 15% Petit Verdot and aged for 15 months in French oak. It exhibits violet, blackberry and licorice aromas on the nose along with some mint-vanilla from oak (40% new). Medium-bodied, it is round and elegant with a velvet texture and good fruit concentration, a licorice note and firm tannins. The tannins support the fruit, and the wine enjoys an elegantly earthy and meaty character. **Vitkin 2008 Old Vine Carignan Binyamina-Zichron 90** This dry-farmed bush-pruned 30-year-old vineyard yields only 1.5-2 tons/acre. Full black-ruby in color, it boasts strong roasted game, black plum cedar and a smoky bacon bouquet with graphite overtones. Aged in 350 Lt demi-muid, it reveals deep, roasted raspberry and dark wild berry flavors with firm chewy tannins and a hint of licorice. This wine will be best after 3-5 years. **Vitkin 2008 Petite Sirah Judean Hills 89** Opaque black purple, this Petite Sirah offers rich blackberry, black pepper and graphite aromas with a hint of violet. Aged in French oak for 16 months, (20% new) it exhibits a big structure and is a dense chewy wine with strong peppery flavors and full, slightly dry tannins. It is a surprisingly refined wine, more like a Syrah than a Petite Sirah. Peak drinking will be from 5-8 years. The grapes are sourced from 30-year-old dry-farmed vines in the Ella Valley area.

Yatir (K) Yatir Winery is a boutique winery 100% owned by Carmel Winery. It is situated at the foot of the Tel Arad archeological site in the northeastern Negev. Its vineyards are located in the Yatir Forest at the southern edge of the Judean Hills at about 3,000 feet. The wines are crafted by Australian-trained winemaker Eran Goldwasser assisted by the winery's manager – Ya'acov Ben Dor. The winery's first vintage was the 2001, released in 2004. Yatir is a young winery but is already clearly among Israel's finest kosher wineries. The Yatir Forest is the top of the line wine but the others are also very well made. **Importer:** Royal Wine Corp, Bayonne, NJ

Yatir 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Negev (\$35) 87+ The hot year was difficult for whites, but this bottling is still full of ripe melon, citrus and grapefruit aromas and flavors. Slightly less vibrant than the 2009, it shows medium acidity, rich focused fruit and a moderately long finish. From a vineyard at Arad, near the winery, at about 500 meters. **Yatir 2010 Viognier Judean Hills (\$35) 88+** The 2010 Viognier has a full yellow-green gold color with a lovely opulent peach-apricot and light honey bouquet. The palate is surprisingly fresh and long with good acidity, a fine elegant touch of citrus, and a bright finish. A quite complete Viognier on a par with the 2009 vintage. **Yatir 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills 89+** Opaque black ruby, the 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon boasts a fine cassis-berry nose. Medium bodied, it has fine structure, yet has soft super ripe black fruit flavors. A touch of oak on the finish combines with nuanced hints of graphite or dried herbs, adding length. Best over the next 4-6 years. **Yatir 2008 Yatir Forest Judean Hills 92** The 2008 Forest is an opaque black ruby colored blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Petit Verdot, 5% Merlot, 3% Malbec and 2% Cabernet Franc.

Always a selection of age-worthy wines from the principal vineyard in the Forest at 900-1000 m, it spends 15 months in about 35% new French oak. Medium-bodied, it boasts dark cassis, black licorice and a floral bouquet. On the palate, it reveals structured flavors with lots of black fruit but is still a bit closed (compared to the 2007 at this stage of development) and needs 6-8 years of cellaring for peak drinking. Excellent promise. **Yatir 2006 Red Judean Hills (\$35) 91** Red is a delicious blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz, Petit Verdot and Malbec. It exhibits an opaque ruby color and is very ripe and soft on the palate with moderate red and black fruit and meaty, earth flavors. The wine is nicely balanced and drinkable now.

Other Wines Reviewed: **Yatir 2008 Petit Verdot Judean Hills 88+** **Yatir 2008 Shiraz Judean Hills 88** **Yatir 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Judean Hills (\$50) 89** **Yatir 2007 Forest Judean Hills (\$75) 93-4**

Zion (K) This family winery was founded in 1848 in the old city of Jerusalem by the Shor family. Today it is located in Mishor Adumim outside of Jerusalem where ninth generation Zvika Shor serves as the winemaker. The winery made only sweet wine for sacramental purposes until recently. Now it produces dry premium table wines in three series: Tidhar, Armon and Erez.
Importer: Royal Wine Corp Bayonne, NJ

Yikvei Zion 2007 Armon Reserve Galilee (\$37) 89 The Armon reserve is a blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot and 7% Petit Verdot. Opaque ruby, it reveals aromas of blackberry, plum and garrigue that are mirrored on the palate. It is nicely structured with round tannins and a persistent finish. ***Delicious.*** **Yikvei Zion 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Erez Vineyard (\$25) 88** Ripe ruby red and black fruit with light toast are offered on the palate of this easy drinking wine. It is beautifully balanced with soft round tannins, nicely integrated oak and a firm finish.

Annex 1

Israel's Young Winemakers

The future of the Israeli wine industry looks bright in light of the many young talented winemakers who are at work around the country. We turn the spotlight on some of them below:

Ben-Zaken, Eytan - Domaine du Castel (Judean Hills)



Eytan Ben Zaken is the second generation winemaker at Domaine du Castel and one of Israel's rising stars in the wine industry. His father Eli Ben Zaken began Domaine du Castel, producing his first wines in 1995. Today Domain du Castel

is one of Israel's finest wineries, and Eytan is contributing to its success.

Goldwasser, Eran - Yatir -Winery (Judean Hills, Negev)



Eran Goldwasser is the winemaker of Yatir Winery. He graduated from Adelaide University in Australia. He has work experience with Rouge Homme Winery in South Australia, now part of Wynns Coonawarra Estate, and Salitage Winery, at Pemberton in Western Australia. He then returned to Israel, worked for Carmel Winery, and joined Yatir before the first harvest. His main objective is to let the terroir speak

and he hopes to create wines to reflect the unique character of the Yatir vineyards.

Hetz, Uri - Chateau Golan (Golan Heights)



Uri became winemaker at Chateau Golan in 2001 and in 2004 joined as a partner. He completed his BS degree in Fermentation Science at Oregon State University in the USA. After a training period at Joseph Phelps winery in

Napa Valley, California, he continued to pursue his Master degree. He is making wines of power and elegance.

Lacser, Lior – Carmel Winery (Mt. Carmel, Upper Galilee)



Lior Lacser joined Carmel in 2003 and became Chief Winemaker in 2005. He is responsible for making 15 million bottles in four different locations, the large historical wineries of Rishon Le Zion, Zichron Ya'acov, and the new state of the art small wineries of Kayoumi in the Upper Galilee and Yatir in the Negev. He studied in Beaune, worked in Burgundy, Bordeaux and Western Australia. He likes to make wines in an elegant old world style.

Paz, Asaf - Binyamina and Vitkin



Asaf Paz is associate winemaker at Binyamina and also makes the wines at Vitkin. Asaf studied in California and Bordeaux and was originally a chef. In 2001, he helped establish Vitkin which is owned by his sister Sharona and Doron Belogolovsky. His wines at

Vitkin made of Carignan, Viognier, Gewurztraminer, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir are on the frontier of winemaking in Israel.

Pick, Eran - Tzora Vineyards (Judean Hills)



Eran Pick is the young and talented UC Davis-trained winemaker at Tzora Vineyards who brings winemaking experience from California, Bordeaux and Australia. He is following in the footsteps of the founder of Tzora, the renowned viticulturalist

Ronnie James. Eran is making outstanding hand-crafted, terroir-driven single vineyard wines of the Judean Hills.

Rotem, Eyal -Clos de Gat (Judean Hills)



Eyal Rotem is the owner and winemaker of Clos de Gat, an outstanding boutique winery situated in the foothills of the Judean Mountains. Eyal learned winemaking in Australia and built his estate winery in 1998 planting vines on 19 hectares. The winery's tasting room building was Yitzhak Rabin's Headquarters during the 1948 War of Independence.

Sadan, Gabi-Shvo Vineyards (Upper Galilee)



Gabi Sadan is the owner and winemaker at Shvo Vineyards, one of Israel's finest boutique wineries. Gabi received his formal winemaking training at The University of Dijon in France and gained hands-on experience in Bordeaux, Burgundy, California and Australia. After his return to Israel he worked on the winemaking team at the Golan Heights

Winery and served as the founding winemaker at Galil Mountain Winery.

Sorkin, Na'ama – Dalton Winery (Upper Galilee)



The winemaking team at Dalton is lead by winemaker Na'ama Sorkin. Na'ama grew up in the north of Israel and comes from a family with close links to the wine industry. Na'ama joined Dalton in 2002 after completing her studies at the University of Adelaide, with work experience in California and Australia.

Vaadia, Micha - Galil Mountain - Winery (Upper Galilee)



Micha Vaadia is Chief Winemaker at Galil Mountain Vineyards. He has a degree in Enology from UC Davis and winemaking experience at J Wine Co, Anderson Navaro and La Crema in California, Cloudy Bay in New Zealand, and Catena in Argentina. Micha became the winemaker at Galil Mountain in

2008 after working at Golan Heights Winery for seven years.

Annex II The Israel Wine Map





Previous Wine Reports



Issue 1	California Petite Sirah
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal
Issue 3	Grenache Wines
Issue 4	Syrah
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero
Issue 9	Champagne
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne
Issue 15	The Wines of Chianti Classico
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal, Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina, Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa, Double Issue
Special Report	South African Value Wines
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino

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