

Stir Crazy

Internet newsletter helps you keep 'wining'

By **DOROTHY LIPOVENKO**
Special to *The CJN*

Wine maven Yossie Horwitz keeps his philosophy simple and upbeat: good wine is the wine you enjoy.

That's the message threading its way through the kosher wine newsletter Horwitz writes and sends out over the Internet each week, as he's been doing for several years, to a growing audience of enthusiasts.

Whether your vino palate runs from greenhorn to sophisticated, the e-newsletter is aimed at anyone with a consuming interest in kosher wine, from what's new and affordable to what pairs well with seasonal and Jewish holiday foods (even greasy latkes).

"There's been an explosion of interest in kosher wine, dovetailing with an increase in availability," says Horwitz, a New York lawyer for whom a glass of the grape with dinner is enjoyment, but also homework, yielding many of the choices discussed in his weekly electronic missive. "But [consumers] are still boxed in by preconceived notions of what is good or not."

Addressing his audience in a folksy style, the father of three mixes a broad knowledge of the kosher wine market with such tips as how to buy wine glasses or navigate the wine list in kosher restaurants. And he takes the mystery out of the language used to describe a wine's flavour by reminding readers that while certain smells are common to certain wines (apples and vanilla to Chardonnay, plums

and cherries to Cabernet Sauvignon), "there is no 'right' or 'wrong' here and everyone tastes and smells different things in a wine."

Red, white and rosé dominate the conversation, but what would a Jewish newsletter be without occasional tidbits about family? One can almost hear a chorus of mazel tovs at the mention of a recent trip Horwitz and his wife took to London and Paris to celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary.

As for French wine, "it took me a while to calibrate my palate to [it]," he said during a telephone interview.

Horwitz is a huge fan of Israeli wines. A native of Boston whose family made aliyah when he was eight, he recalls growing up in a household where virtually no alcohol other than wine for Kiddush was consumed.

But a bottle of Bordeaux brought by a guest to the family home in Israel changed that for Yossie. Intrigued by its dryness, he began, as a young adult, to dabble in kosher wine tastings, sharpening his preferences and training his nose to pick up on a good bouquet.

On returning to the United States with his wife and children six years ago, Horwitz found people tapping him for advice on kosher wine, particularly around the high-volume buying season at Pesach.

That led to his jotting down suggestions and e-mailing them to an initial contact list of 50 – the list has since swelled to about 850 subscribers, including a few hundred in Israel, as word of the free newsletter spread.

Its content also expanded: one finds not just wine recommendations (at different price points), but also brief,

entertaining lessons on wine history and the role it plays in Jewish life. And readers can learn not just about new bottles from Israel but about the winery in the mountains of northern Jerusalem that produces them.

The newsletter's recommendations start life in a big notebook, where Horwitz pens his thoughts on what he's sampled at kosher wine tastings, the bottles in a small wine fridge at home or the more diverse collection (skewed heavily to white over red) kept in a relative's cellar.

"I am not a critic," Horwitz says. "I only write about the wines I like."

And for those who've always wondered what wine marries well with cholent, Horwitz suggests "a chunky red."

You can sign up for the newsletter at www.yossiescorkboard.com

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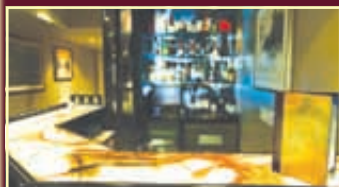
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