

Leket Israel Wine Club



December 2011



Wine club members enjoying themselves at the first Leket Israel Wine Club dinner in NYC.

LEKET ISRAEL NEWS

Wonderful new developments have taken place at Leket Israel over the past few months. Food rescue is up 90% over 2010 (in both the agricultural and manufactured sectors) and Leket was recognized as Israel's representative of the Global Food Banking Network. The organization recently completed an external assessment (by MIDOT) of its managerial processes, transparency and accountability and scored highly in all aspects of its activities.

It was a pleasure meeting many of you at the first ever Leket Israel Wine Club dinner, held in New York City in September. I hope you enjoyed yourselves as much as I did and I look forward to seeing you at our next event.

Your continued support of Leket Israel's food rescue activities makes a huge difference on the ground in Israel. **Just \$5 rescues 15 hot meat meals** and can put a smile on the face of an elderly Holocaust survivor, struggling single mother, new immigrant and many others in need this *Chanukah*. Visit www.leket.org/english to make a year-end donation.

Notes on your wine selections from our resident oenophile, Yossie Horwitz

While most Jewish holidays fall under the theme of "they tried to kill us, we won, let's eat" and are celebrated with copious amounts of meat, sugar, fat and cholesterol, *Chanukah* is a particularly good example of this credo with the sheer number of treats specifically associated with it. The cornucopia of unhealthy (but oh-so-delicious) foods traditionally associated with *Chanukah* include *Sufganiyot* (deep fried donuts filled with jelly, crème, chocolate goo or *dulce le leche* among others), *Latkes* (fried potato pancakes), cheeses and other assorted goodies. The oil-based foods commemorate part of the *Chanukah* miracle, in which a one-day supply of oil for the *Menorah* lasted a full eight days (now, if only this miracle could be replicated in my wine cellar).

In light of all the artery-clogging treats we will be consuming over the holiday, incorporating red wine into our diets becomes even more important given that red wine has been scientifically proven to be very good for our hearts (a special shout-out to those scientists who have dedicated their lives and research to the medical benefits of booze is definitely in order). That said, crisp white wines and sparkling wines are better matches to all the oil-based, fried food, as their bracing acidity provides a refreshing balance to all that heavy food. Sparkling wine also helps create a festive environment which is definitely appropriate for this *Chag*. To that end and to make sure all your bases are covered, for this holiday shipment of the Leket Israel Wine Club we have included a delightful sparkling wine from the Golan Heights Winery and a number of red wines for your enjoyment.

Golan Heights Winery

Regardless of my adoration of the smaller wineries, the Golan Heights Winery remains the gold standard for Israeli wineries. Historically, this winery kick-started the kosher wine quality revolution. Their Cabernet Sauvignon wines in the Yarden series, whose vintages date back to the early 90s, are still drinking very well. If you are looking for a wine with any serious cellaring capability, this wine remains the most consistently good and reasonably priced Israeli wine on the market today.

Until recently, GHW produced wines under three labels – Yarden, Gamla and Golan. In 1990 they introduced a flagship wine – the Katzrin--and followed with a Katzrin Chardonnay a few years later. The 2001 vintage yielded another ultra-premium single vineyard label, with a Cabernet Sauvignon from the El-Rom vineyard and a Merlot from the Ortal vineyard. These days, they are producing multiple single vineyard wines and have added Syrah to the range of varieties. A few years ago, they introduced another flagship label – Rom– which was launched to rave reviews by the late Daniel Rogov and sold out rapidly.



www.yossiescorkboard.com

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Golan Heights Winery, Yarden, Blanc De Blancs, 2005: Fortunately, this wine finally made it to our shores as it is easily a YH Best Buy and the best substitute for a true kosher *Champagne* at a much lower price. After successive (and successful) releases in 1998, 1999 and 2000, the last marketed vintage of this wine was the delicious 2001 vintage. I am not sure why they waited four years to make another, but am happy they finally did! If I needed to sum up this wine in one word it would be an easy task (even for me) – delicious. Grapefruit, lime, apple, melon and hints of pineapple abound in this delicious wine which is bone dry and loaded with crisp acidity. Toasted yeasty brioche and sharp, long-lasting bubbles make this wine a delight and an awesome match with almost any dish you care to throw its way. Stock up while you can since, at around \$25 a bottle, it won't be around for long but should cellar comfortably through 2020.

Carmel Winery

As the Carmel Winery was recently showcased in detail on these pages (in the *Shavuot* shipment), I wanted to briefly discuss their Appellation series, from which the Carmel wine in this shipment comes. For more detail on Carmel, including its illustrious 120-year history (and counting), see my recent write-up on the winery on my website: www.yossiescorkboard.com.

For whatever reason, Carmel's Appellation (or Regional) Series is less well-known than its upper-tier series. This is hugely unfortunate. Given the high value-for-quality ratio of this series, consumers are really missing out on some great wines at good prices. Easily recognizable by the funky labels (each wine is represented by an ancient mosaic of a different animal), the wines are complex and consistently delicious across the board, representing yet another class of wines that can be purchased without hesitation and be guaranteed a good wine. The series includes single varietals of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz, Petit-Sirah Old Vines, Carignan Old Vines (which is included in this shipment), Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Viognier, Johannesburg Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and two blends - White Ridge (a blend of Chardonnay, Colombard and Sémillon) and Red Ridge (a blend of Carignan, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon). Anecdotally, the first "Limited Edition" from the 2002 vintage was actually bottled as part of the Appellation Series and priced accordingly which, at the time, gave folks in the know an amazing bargain!!

Carmel, Appellation, Carignan, 2007: The Carignan grape was probably a significant contributor to Carmel's prior horrific reputation for terrible wines since it was a major component in cheaper and unappealing wines. This wine really puts the much maligned grape in a whole new (favorable) light. Using grapes from 40-year-old vines and blended with some Petit Verdot for good measure, this wine has great fruit and is slightly spicy with hints of espresso and a nice finish. Not many folks do well by this grape but Carmel certainly does. While this wine will cellar nicely through 2013 at least, it is drinking beautifully right now and there isn't any reason to wait to enjoy it.

Teperberg

Like Carmel, Teperberg is another one of Israel's oldest wineries and has undergone a welcome renaissance in recent years and now produces top tier wines. The winery was founded in 1870 as the Efrat Winery by the Teperberg family in the Old City of Jerusalem and in 1964 relocated to *Motza*, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. For most of that time the winery produced mainly sweet *Kiddush* wines that were of little oenophilic interest. Starting in the early 1990s, the winery decided to try its hand at making real table wine with limited success until 2002 with the arrival of California-trained winemaker Shiki Rauchberger. A few years ago Teperberg once again relocated to *Kibbutz Tzora* and officially changed its name to Teperberg.

The winery produces approximately four million bottles annually in three series: Reserve, Silver (which is *mevushal* and provides some good options in that regard) and Terra. They still produce a number of lower tiered wines which are primarily mass-market wines and of little interest to most wine aficionados. Teperberg still produces too many undesirable wines (and their consistency year-to-year needs improvement) to be a Safe Bet Winery, but they are definitely on target for that title, and their very fair pricing and increased quality have resulted in them having quite a few YH Best Buys in their portfolio. They make a number of blends as well as single varietal wines from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling, Shiraz and their most interesting wine – a Malbec. As a side note and a follow-up to my newsletter from a few weeks ago, while they are producing very good wines worthy of your *lirot*, with the exception of the Malbec, none of their offerings has really grabbed my attention with creativity, individualism or long-term aging. However, Rome wasn't built in a day and, with their current and constantly improving track record, I have little doubt that they too will reach the pinnacle of success. With the addition of Frenchman Olivier Fratty as an assistant winemaker to the team, I look forward to seeing more from this team in the coming years.

Teperberg, Terra, Malbec, 2009: I enjoyed the inaugural 2007 vintage of this wine, which is traditionally not the easiest to grow; very few Israeli wineries make single varietal versions (Malbec has historically been utilized by Israeli winemakers for blending purposes). The improved 2009 vintage is just another indicator of the continuing improvement of this winery. A full-bodied wine packed with mouth-watering acidity that makes for good food pairing, balanced with bright notes of black cherries, blackberries and notes of juicy plums on the nose together with a slight hint of toasty oak and some warm spices leading into a medium to long finish with hints of chocolate and vanilla layered with more fruit. A YH Best Buy that is delightful to drink now and which should cellar nicely through 2014.

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Barkan

Barkan is the second largest winery in Israel after Carmel, producing approximately 10,000,000 bottles annually including the wines of the Segal Winery, wholly owned by Barkan, with an ever-increasing number of quality wines with the depth, creativity and sophistication to entice even the more jaded wine appreciators among us. The most recent example of this is a new series titled "Assemblage," comprised of unique blends intended to reflect the *terroir* from which they are derived. While not yet available in the United States, they will likely grace our shores soon. With the launch of the Assemblage series, Barkan produces wines across five labels - Superior, Altitude, Assemblage, Reserve and Classic- which from time to time provides a YH Best Buy (previous candidates have been their Pinot Noir and Petit Sirah). Segal also produces a multitude of labels, the most interesting of which are the magnificent Unfiltered and delightful Single Vineyard wines from the Rehasim and Dovev vineyards. As is becoming more common in Israel, Barkan releases wines from more experimental varieties such as Pinotage and Tempranillo.

The Cabernet Sauvignon included in this shipment comes from their Altitude label. As may be inferred from the wine's name, the wines in this label are differentiated solely by the altitude of the vineyards from which the grapes were harvested (the wines were otherwise made by the same techniques and winemakers). The idea behind the label was to see how different altitudes (and the resulting micro-climates which comprise a substantial part of *terroir*) affect the wine. The label was launched with the 2003 vintage and has since been released with the 2005, 2007 and 2008. Each vintage release contains three Cabernet Sauvignon wines from vineyards at altitudes of 412 meters, 624 meters and 720 meters. The 624 wine in this shipment comes from Barkan's Alma vineyard located in the upper Galil. While a slightly expensive endeavor, a comparative tasting of all three wines side by side is a pretty cool experience.

Barkan, Altitude +624, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2007: A full-bodied wine with robust notes of black fruits including blackberries, black cherries, currants and a nice jolt of plums. More fruit follows on the palate joined by spicy wood derived from the 14 months in French oak, roasted Mediterranean herbs, good dark chocolate and roasted coffee beans all cocooned by caressing tannins that provide for good balance with the fruit and wood. Delicious right now, this wine will cellar nicely through 2016.

Chag Samaech and Le'Chaim,

Yossie

ABOUT LEKET ISRAEL

Leket Israel, the country's largest food bank and leading food rescue network, is dedicated to eliminating hunger in Israel. Leket Israel both rescues food and maintains the country's first food-buying cooperative for non-profit organizations (NPOs). Leket Israel also provides NPOs with the know-how, tools and means to efficiently and effectively distribute food to Israel's hungry via nutritional education, consultation and capacity-building assistance. Offering food rescue and delivery, centralized buying, and professional guidance under one umbrella, Leket Israel is bringing food to the tables of Israel's needy.

To learn more, please visit: www.leket.org/english