

### Kosher Wines for Passover



I like to think of Passover as the Jewish version of Thanksgiving. Families and friends gather together to tell stories and eat a traditional meal, called the “Seder”. But there are a couple of small, eensy-weensy differences.

First, the Passover meal must be prepared without using any products that incorporate yeast. This is in deference to the Jew’s hasty departure out of Egypt when they did not have time for their bread to rise. But the second requirement, a big one in my book, is the Rabbinic obligation that four cups of wine are to be consumed during the Seder. Although grape juice is an acceptable substitute, the Mishnah – a history book of sorts - insists that “even the poorest man in Israel” is obligated to drink and enjoy the fruit of the vine.

But here’s the catch; for proper observance, the wines served at a Seder meal should be kosher. That means that the wines have to be harvested, vinified and bottled according to very specific rules and rabbinic oversight. In some situations, this could include - and I am not making this up – boiling the wines. The latter is how most of the cloyingly sweet concord grape-based wines are made. The good news is that those wines are quickly becoming less popular.

Today, kosher wines have entered a new era. There are a several countries that are dedicated to producing quality wines for all consumers. Israel is leading the way with six wine producing regions turning out some pretty good juice. Italy, New Zealand, Australia and California are also on the map with respectable Kosher wine offerings.

Here are a few of my favorites to go with some of the courses...

If you are planning on serving fish as your main course, consider opening a bottle or two of **2011 Covenant Chardonnay Sonoma Mountain Lavan** from Sonoma, California. This has a lovely bouquet of lemon blossom and apple on the nose and bright flavors of lime, nectarine, and green apple on a well-balanced frame. Abundant acidity keeps the finish light and fresh. Kosher. **\$40**

Charoset is one of the symbolic foods on the Passover Seder Plate. Made with nuts, apple and honey and its color and texture are meant to recall the mortar that held the stones in place on the ancient pyramids. It may look like mud, but it’s delicious, and the **2012 Baron Herzog Chenin Blanc** from Clarksburg, California, is just the wine to wash it down with. It has wonderfully zippy flavors of lemon meringue, ripe white peach and juicy apple flavors, with a lush frame and a refreshing finish. Kosher. **\$10**

The **2010 Recanti Merlot Galilee Reserve, Manara Vineyard** from Israel offers up a perfumed, floral aroma, with nicely sculpted flavors of dark currant, plum tart, pomegranate and mocha. Medium-grained tannins give this backbone. Finishes with dark chocolate, raspberry jam and minty overtones. Kosher. Could work well with both brisket for the main course and chocolate covered matzo for dessert. **\$25**

The **2009 Binyamina Merlot Galilee Reserve** from Israel is a powerful red that sports flavors of fresh black raspberries, dark cherries and dried cranberry notes. Hints of black tea are joined by bittersweet chocolate on the long, supple finish. Kosher. Another good choice with brisket. **\$25**

An excellent choice from south of the equator is the **2012 Beckett’s Flat Five Stones Shiraz**. Located in the Margaret River appellation of Australia, Becket’s Flat has been making kosher wines since 1998. Their Shiraz – or Syrah as it’s know north of the equator – displays characteristic blackberry and dark plum flavors up front and distinctive notes of black pepper on the balanced, powerful finish. A perfect choice with leg of lamb. **\$25**