

# THE TASTING PANEL

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## Drinking with the Duke

*Jayson Woodbridge, Ethan Wayne and Chris Radomski are Keeping the Spirit of John Wayne Alive*

PHOTO: LEIGH CASTELLI

# Kosher Crossover

AT THEIR 7TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL  
FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL, ROYAL WINE  
CORP. AND HERZOG WINE CELLARS  
FILL A NICHE THAT NO ONE ELSE CAN

by Meredith May / photos by Mark Ryan

Meet Doug Simon, new VP/National Sales Manager for Royal Wine Company. Surprise: He's not Jewish. But his background of leading sales divisions for some of the biggest international wine portfolios—including Kendall Jackson and The Henry Wine Group—has given him access to a family business that has, up until now, been keen on keeping it . . . kosher.

"Wherever there is great wine to be produced, we are there," says eighth-generation Joseph Herzog, Director of Herzog Wine Cellars in California. His family's Royal Wine Corp., based out of New York and distributed nationally, has revolutionized the world's view of kosher wines, importing premium wines from 48 wineries in about 15 countries.

The family's vision to impart the message that *kosher* can mean *quality* is a mission that Simon will champion. "This challenge is intriguing for me," he tells THE TASTING PANEL, when we met in Los Angeles at the company's International Food & Wine Festival. "The model of being able to bring in a new dynamic to these outstanding wines—from Israel, Italy, Spain, New Zealand . . . and French wines that are partnerships with the Rothschilds—takes these fine wines out of the fog of *kosher* and into an upscale niche that speaks to today's wine buyers."

With the Herzog family driving change in the kosher category (Simon's 13-person national sales team will expand to about 25 in the coming year), a new awareness of this stunning portfolio, which speaks the language of quality from value-packed wines to outright luxury offerings, will surely be dawning on- and off-premise wine professionals.

**Joseph Herzog with Doug Simon, Royal Wines new VP/National Sales Manager.**



# The Festival: A Royal Treatment

Here are just some of the global standouts from this year's show.



**Jürgen Wagner, winemaker for Spain's Capçanes Cellars.**

## FROM MONTSANT, SPAIN: CAPÇANES

Capçanes has been making kosher wines in Spain's Montsant D.O. since the Jewish community in Barcelona first made the request in 1995. Since then, new equipment has been installed that allows the winemakers to identify, isolate and vinify small parcels of quality fruit, including old-vine Garnacha.

Limestone and schist soils create complex, round, fruity wines—and the pretty **2012 Peraj Petita**, a blend of Garnacha, Tempranillo and Merlot, shows off the floral qualities for which this “petite flower” is named. Aged in barrel and tank and kept just a short time on the skins, the tannins are soft and the wine is juicy. Jasmine and Old World minerality make a wonderful combination in this value-quality \$20 SRP red.

## FROM GALILEE, ISRAEL: TABOR

Growers first, Tabor Winery were already farming grapes in the early 20th century. Almost 100 years later, in 1999, the family started producing their own label, led by CEO Oren Sela, fourth generation of wine growers in the Galilee region of Israel.

The **Tabor Adama** focuses on the terroir of fertile Galilee, with grapes grown on four unique soils in the foothills of Mt. Tabor through the guidance of superstar viticulturist/agronomist Mical Akerman. “We’re the sixth largest producer in Israel,” says Justin Kohn, Export Manager for Tabor. “We produce 2.3 million bottles a year.”

Experimental plantings by the Tabor team include the country's first-ever Roussanne and Tannat, according to Kohn. “There are so many sub-climates in Israel,” he explains. “It’s perfect for Mediterranean varieties.”



**Justin Kohn is Export Manager for Tabor Winery.**



**The 2010 Adama Cabernet Sauvignon, released last August, offers up chocolate cherry on the nose with a pure, sensuous bright-fruited, subtly spiced palate and silky tannins. The rich Terra Rossa soil of the Kedesh Valley is well-drained and abundant in vital minerals, contributing to this wine's earthy and textured full body.**

## FROM LOWER GALILEE, ISRAEL: DOMAINE NETOFA



**Yair Teboule, CEO of Israel's Domaine Netofa with winemaker Pierre Miodownik.**

For the past 30 years, French winemaker Pierre Miodownik has been producing wine from some of France's best growing regions. Royal Wine Corp.'s partnerships with well-known châteaux, Champagne houses and Vins de Pays producers allow labels such as Château Léoville Poyferré, Château Pontet Canet, Laurent Perrier and the centuries-old Drappier Champagne,

among others, to be made for the kosher markets.

Since 2009, Miodownik took his French winemaking expertise to Israel, to Lower Galilee, where he founded Domaine Netofa. At almost 1,000 feet above sea level, he crafts Iberian and French varietals such as Syrah, Touriga Nacional, Chenin Blanc and Mourvèdre in his unmistakable French style. "While many wines from Israel are big and bold, Domaine Netofa wines are refined and elegant, after the Rhône Valley style of winemaking," points out winery CEO Yair Teboule.

**The Domaine Netofa 2013 Rosé (of Syrah and Mourvèdre), Basse Galilee, is a nod to Provence, with its delicate, fresh rose petal nose. Raspberry is lyrical and sweet against the dry and dusted stoniness that wafts on the tongue. Netofa Tinto 2011, Galilee, is a blend of Tempranillo and Touriga Nacional. Taste the dirt as if the grapes were grown in Pamplona; think of bull fights, without the attack. Sweet cigar leaf, bittersweet chocolate tannins—this wine has grip with an edge.**



## FROM NELSON, NEW ZEALAND: GOOSE BAY



**Matt Rutherford is the winemaker for Goose Bay, from Nelson, New Zealand. "We're not Jewish, but we produce kosher-for-Passover mevushal wines—no one can tell the difference."**

"These wines need to be exactly like the non-kosher version," insists Matt Rutherford, winemaker for New Zealand's Goose Bay wines. He offers a glass of his **Goose Bay 2012 Reserve Fumé Blanc**, a just-released oak-aged Sauvignon Blanc from the Nelson appellation.

"Take a typical Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and put it in a barrel and it would be clunky," he proffers. "But in Nelson's terroir it's still aromatic and unmistakably

New Zealand." He's right: the asparagus/gooseberry and just-plucked tomato leaf is there. Add lees aging, ML, French oak and it's a whole 'nother level of complexity.



**The just-released oak-aged Goose Bay Fumé Blanc offers New Zealand typicity—and more. It won a Gold Medal from the San Francisco International Wine Competition.**



**Matt Rutherford also produces kosher wines from Oregon and Washington State under the Pacifica label, such as this fruit-forward, feminine 2010 Walla Walla Cabernet Sauvignon.**

## FROM JERUSALEM, ISRAEL: MONTEFIORE



**Arnon Geva is the founder and CEO of Kerem Montefiore.**

New with Royal Wine Corp. is Kerem Montefiore, a small boutique winery founded in 2010 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first neighborhood outside the Old City walls of Jerusalem, Mishkenot Sha'ananim.

The grapes are grown in vineyards in the Judean Hills, where vines have grown since biblical times. The wines were launched in 2013

and have been praised by the press and connoisseurs. *The New Israel Wine Guide* listed Montefiore Red as one of Israel's top ten wines.

**Montefiore 2010 Petite Sirah, Judean Hills is aged in small French oak barrels for 14 months. Violets, grilled meats, blackberry and plum permeate this red, and with only 13% alcohol, its roundness is unlike many Petite Sirahs that rake the teeth and tongue with huge tannins. Limestone soil showcases a lean minerality.**



**Herzog winemaker Joe Hurliman, with this year's "rock star" single-vineyard project release.**

## FROM NAPA VALLEY, CA: HERZOG SINGLE VINEYARD CABERNET SAUVIGNON

As Joe Hurliman goes into his 16th harvest with Herzog Winery, his pet project is going into its fifth year. Every year since 2007 Hurliman has chosen a single vineyard from California's best growing regions from which to craft a luxury wine.

Just released is the **Herzog 2011 Basin Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley** (\$75). "This is from a true microclimate," explains Hurliman. It comes from a 1,100-foot elevation in the northernmost part of Napa Valley—almost into Lake County. In 2011, this vineyard achieved a perfect ripeness and plenty of warm sun exposure. The wine aged for 18 months in oak [92% French and 8% American]."

Asked why he chose this vineyard site, Hurliman replies: "I fell in love with the volcanic influence in the soil." The wine is focused, chewy, sinuous and broad. Cherry-coffee, pencil lead and vanilla-caramel-cedar lay the foundation for the dark black, plummy fruit that winds its way around the wine's savory depth. ■■



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says eighth-generation Joseph Herzog, Director of Herzog Wine Cellars in California. His family's Royal Wine Corp., based out of New York and distributed nationally, has revolutionized the world's view of kosher wines, importing premium wines from 48 wineries in about 15 countries.