

One family, four wineries & 'Arba Kossot'



The Israeli Montefiores – from left, Rachel, Adam and David – and the wines they represent.

• Text and photos: ADAM MONTEFIORE

For me, Seder night is like a Roman banquet, with a focus on wine. As in a real banquet, there are a number of courses, and the compulsory glasses of wine are spread throughout the evening.

Why four glasses (*arba kossot*) of wine? This is attributed to the four expressions of God on the Exodus: "I will bring you out... I will deliver you... I will redeem you... I will take you..." Individually, the four glasses are known as the cups of sanctification (*kiddush*), deliverance, redemption and praise.

Wine was a symbol of freedom, and reclining while drinking seems to fit in very well with the Roman banquet idea. The Mishna says that "even the poorest...

must be given no less than four cups."

Far be it for me to disobey a request such as this, but there is no danger of it in our family!

Wine has always played an exaggerated role in our Seder nights. For us, Passover is a time when I get out my finest cut-glass decanters, which belonged to my grandfather. The meal is like a real banquet, and the matching of wines to different stages is also very banquet-like.

You could choose a sparkling wine for the first glass, and a white, red and dessert wine for the second, third and fourth glasses. The second and third wines may also be used to accompany the meal.

IN MY family of wine-lovers, we do go a little over the top. We always take the opportunity of the get-together to arrange

a special tasting in advance, an hour or two before the Seder night begins.

Each time, there is a theme. Two years ago, we had a vertical tasting of Yatir Forest, the prestige wine of Yatir Winery, tasting successive years from 2001 to 2008. Last year, we had a tasting of the best Shiraz, Syrahs and Petite Sirahs in Israel. The tasting was blind, the bottles wrapped in silver paper, but apart from that it was meant to be informal and fun.

Then, for the four glasses, we always find something special. It may be one of the original Yarden Katzrins, an old magnum or an old vintage of Carmel Limited Edition or Yatir Forest. My wife prefers white wines, so there is something for her, like Carmel Kayoumi Riesling, Yatir Viognier or C Blanc du Castel. My only rules are that the wine must be kosher –



(M.C.F.)

obviously – and Israeli.

The fact that we are a small family in Israel works to our advantage. We can therefore make a special effort with the wines. I am sure if we had 20 guests, we would think differently!

I HAVE been in the drinks industry all my working life. After time in the English wine trade, my wife and I made aliya with three young children in 1989, and I suppose that since then I have devoted myself to advancing Israeli wine.

Today I work for Carmel Winery, the historic winery of Israel, founded by Baron Edmond de Rothschild in 1882. This has been the national winery of Israel in three centuries, under the Turks, the British Mandate and finally, the State of Israel. Despite local strife in the form of world wars, regional wars and terrorism, Carmel has never missed a single vintage.

Carmel also owns Yatir, one of the most famous Israeli boutique wineries, in a unique growing area. This is why it is always highly likely that Carmel and Yatir both feature prominently *chez nous* on this annual wine evening.

The problem is this year. Why is this year different from other years? Well, my two children living in Israel (a third lives in En-

gland) both now work for wineries, and of course expect their wines to feature.

How they got into wine, I have no idea. Where they got it from is obvious, but they showed no interest when young. My son David studied classics and English literature at Tel Aviv University; fast-forward a few years and he was a sommelier and wines-and-spirits manager in some of Israel's leading wine restaurants. He studied wine at the Wine and Spirit Education Trust in London, and traveled to do harvests in the Barossa Valley in Australia and Monsant in Spain. Hey, presto! He now works for Tabor Winery as wine culture manager.

My daughter Rachel, while studying nutrition and Chinese medicine, suddenly started working at wine stores like Vino Cigar and Derech Hayayin. She took an eight-month wine course, became a sommelier in celebrity chef restaurants and then marketed Austrian, Sicilian and Israeli wines. Now, she has become a partner in a new, start-up winery called Kerem Montefiore. (Nothing to do with me, but a nice name!)

So suddenly, instead of my being able to choose wines at will, I now have to ensure each winery is represented. Four wineries: Carmel, Montefiore, Tabor, Yatir. How fortunate there are four glasses!

OF COURSE, the wineries are very different in size. Carmel is Israel's largest winery, producing 15 million bottles a year. Tabor is fast-growing, and is already Israel's fifth largest winery. Yatir is a boutique winery and Montefiore is tiny, producing only 20,000 bottles.

The four wineries really do cover the map of Israel. Tabor Winery is situated at Kfar Tavor in the Galilee, in the shadow of Mount Tabor. The center of Carmel's winemaking operations is at Zichron Ya'acov, on the southern slopes of Mount Carmel. Montefiore Winery takes its fruit from the Judean Hills on the way to Jerusalem. Yatir Winery is situated in the northeastern Negev desert. This makes it interesting, as wine has a sense of place.

The winemakers also bring variety, as they honed their skills in different places. Carmel's winemaker studied in France, Tabor's in Russia, Yatir's in Australia, and Montefiore's is Canadian.

So David, Rachel and I each decided to make our own selections, on the principle of having one wine only from each of the four wineries. If there were any duplications, that consensus is what we would choose.

But of course, we all came up with different suggestions!

ULTIMATELY, WHAT do you do in a family where four wineries are represented? Decide not to decide. At least we have an idea for our pre-Passover tasting this year. Regarding the four glasses, let's just say we will keep it in the family.

The only thing we could agree on is that after dinner, we would offer a choice of Carmel Vintage (port style) 2007 or Carmel 100 Brandy. Phew, that was easier!

Wishing you a kosher and happy wine festival! *

Adam Montefiore works for Carmel Winery and writes the regular "Wine Talk" column in The Jerusalem Post, published in the Weekend supplement and on www.jpost.com.

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I chose:

- First glass:** Tabor Roussanne 2013
- Second:** Montefiore Syrah 2011
- Third:** Carmel Mediterranean 2009
- Fourth:** Yatir Cabernet Sauvignon 2009

Rachel chose:

- First glass:** Tabor Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Second:** Yatir Merlot Shiraz Cabernet 2009
- Third:** Carmel Kayoumi Cabernet Sauvignon 2009
- Fourth:** Montefiore Kerem Moshe 2011

David chose:

- First glass:** Carmel Kayoumi Riesling 2012
- Second:** Montefiore Red 2013
- Third:** Tabor Adama II Lehava (Flame) 2010
- Fourth:** Yatir Forest 2007

