

# New York The Jewish Week

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## Food

### Amazing Grapes

The best kosher wines of 2008.

#### Gamliel Kronemer

Special To The Jewish Week

2008 was a tough year for American wine consumers. During the first half of the year, high transportation costs and a weak dollar sent wine prices soaring to record highs, and those high prices combined with the recent economic woes, have created a situation where many wine retailers are struggling to move their inventory.

Ironically, this has also been a year that has seen the release of some truly excellent, albeit very expensive, kosher wines. So for this month's Fruit of The Vine, I have put together a list, albeit idiosyncratic rather than definitive, of the best new kosher wines I tasted in 2008.

**1. Chateau Guiraud, Sauternes, 2001:** The sweet wines of Sauternes tend to vary greatly in quality from vintage to vintage, as a truly excellent Sauternes requires just the right weather conditions at the end of the growing season, and 2001 was the best vintage for Sauternes in nearly 30 years. The 2001 Chateau Guiraud is a super-sweet, tawny-gold-colored, viscous wine that has a very musty nose, with hints of apricots, peaches, oranges, candied citrus, lichees and spices. The flavor is very complex. At first taste the dominant flavors are peaches and apricots, with hints of bitter-oranges and allspice; but as the wine opens up, look for flavors of lichees, apples, quince, lemons, and Asian spices. Although drinking very well now, this wine has the potential to cellar for at least another decade. **Score A.** (We could not find a current retailer).

**2. Covenant Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006:** This big, bright garnet-colored, full-bodied wine was produced by Jeff Morgan, a former Wine Spectator Magazine journalist, and Leslie Rudd, owner of Rudd Vineyards. The wine has a rich bouquet of cassis, crème de cassis, black cherries, and blackberries, with hints of vanilla, and eucalyptus. Although drinking well now, the wine will only start to be at its best late next year, and should age well until at least 2012. **Score A. \$94.95.** Available at Sherry Lehmann, 505 Park Ave. (Manhattan), (212) 838-7500.

**3. Four Gates Winery, Syrah, Santa Cruz Mountains,**

**2004:** Tucked away on a small, isolated, plateau in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Four Gates Winery is the smallest kosher winery in the country. Owner/vintner/winemaker Benjamin Cantz produces approximately 400 cases of wine annually from organically grown, non-irrigated grapes. His 2004 Syrah is a dark and inky garnet-colored, full-bodied wine which has flavors and aromas of red cherries, mixed berries, and black pepper, with hints of mocha and smoke. Drink now through 2011. **Score A.** (We could not find a current retailer).

**4. (Tied) Yarden, Merlot, Ortal Vineyard, Golan Heights, 2004:** Made from grapes grown in the Ortal vineyard, located on the slopes of the Avital Volcano, and aged for fourteen months in small French oak barrels, this bright garnet colored, full-bodied wine has a bouquet of cherries, cassis, oak and cedar. Look for flavors of cassis, Bing cherries, raspberries, blackberries and toasted oak, with hints of fennel, pepper and espresso. This wine is still somewhat tight and needs at least another year to open up and fully integrate. Best 2010-2015. **Score A. \$59.99.** Available at Skyview Wine and Liquors, 5681 Riverdale Ave. (Riverdale), (718) 601-8222.

**4. (Tied) Yarden, Syrah, Ortal Vineyard, Golan Heights, 2004:** Like the Merlot listed above, this wine was made from grapes grown in the Ortal vineyard, located on the slopes of the Avital Volcano. Aged for 18 months in small French oak barrels, this dark garnet colored, full-bodied wine has flavors and aromas of cherries, raspberries, blackberries, plums, crème de cassis, mocha, and pipe tobacco. Best now through 2015. **Score A. \$59.99.** Available at Skyview Wine and Liquors, 5681 Riverdale Ave. (Riverdale), (718) 601-8222.

**6. Domaine Pinnacle, Ice Apple Wine, Quebec Provence:** Made from apples that are frozen at temperatures as low as minus 35 degrees Fahrenheit, and fermented for up to eight months, this is a rich, super-sweet, viscous, and velvety smooth caramel-colored wine which has a rich bouquet of apples, caramel, cardamom, cinnamon, and pepper. Look for flavors of apples, caramel, heather, and cardamom, with a hint of white pepper, and a bracing level of acidity. This wine is very food friendly. **Score A. \$32.99.** Available at Shoppers Vineyard, 875 Bloomfield

Ave. (Clifton, N.J.), (973) 916-0707

**7. Chateau Piada, Sauternes, 2001:** Another delightful dessert wine from the great Sauternes vintage of 2001, this dark-gold colored and intensely sweet wine has flavors and aromas of heather, lichees, apricots, lemon zest, kumquats, toasted white bread, cloves, cardamom, and white pepper. Drink now through 2012. **Score A. \$74.99.** Available at Gotham Wine & Liquors, 2517 Broadway (Manhattan), (212) 932-0990.

**8. Four Gates Winery, Chardonnay, Santa Cruz Mountains, 2004:** This is a medium-to-full-bodied, tawny straw-colored wine, with a delightful nose of apples, honeysuckle, ground pepper, allspice, and just a slight whiff of oak. Look for flavors of apples, quince, and lemons, with hints of vanilla and spice. It is a well-balanced wine, with just enough sweetness to offset the wine's high acidity. Ready to drink now, this wine should be consumed within the next 12 to 18 months. **Score A/A-.** (We could not find a current retailer).

**9. Chateau Smith-Haut-Lafitte, Pessac-Léognan, 2002:** This elegant Bordeaux was made from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. The wine has a medium-to-full body, an inky dark-garnet color, an earthy nose with elements of cassis and Bing cherries, and flavors of cassis, blackberries and cherries, with a pleasant

hint of leather, and a nice mineral element on the finish. Drink now through 2011. **Score A-.** \$175. Available at Blanc & Rouge 81 Washington St. (Brooklyn), (718) 858-9463

**10. Red Fern Cellars, Merlot, North Fork, L.I., 2005:** Made at New York's only kosher boutique winery, this wine is a fruit-forward, garnet-colored, light-to-medium-bodied varietal Merlot. Look for flavors and aromas of red cherries, cranberries, cassis, hints of toasted oak, cedar and spice, and a light touch of mocha on the finish. This very food-friendly wine is ready to drink now and for the next three years. **Score A-.** \$19.95. Available directly from the winery, www.redferncellars.com. ■

Fruit of the Vine appears the second week of the month.



Domaine Pinnacle's Ice Apple Wine features a balance of flavors, spices.