

Jancis Robinson's Tasting Notes Jan 2015

On Yatir and Carmel

CARMEL

Founded as a co-operative in the 1880s with funding from Baron Edmond de Rothschild, the pioneer of the modern Israeli wine industry, Carmel is the largest wine producer in the country (c 13 million bottles per annum) and the largest producer of kosher wine in the world. They have two large wineries: Zichron Ya'acov on the southern slopes of Mount Carmel overlooking the Mediterranean - the biggest winery in Israel - and Rishon Le Zion just south of Tel Aviv. In addition, they have the smaller Kayoumi cellar closer to the vineyards in Upper Galilee in the north. Yatir in the north-eastern Negev in the south is a wholly owned subsidiary of Carmel (see below). They make a huge range of wines in just about every style and price category (see their [website](#) for more details). In the last decade much more attention has been given to quality, and Carmel continued its pioneering role by being the first to plant vineyards in the Negev desert.

Carmel, Selected Sauvignon Blanc 2013 Galilee

Utterly recognisable varietal aromas with good fruit on the mid palate. I'm sure if I were in Israel I would lap up the combination of freshness and fruit this offers. It is not bone dry and presumably has acid added, but it is well done.

12.5%

Drink 2014-2015

15.5

Carmel, Private Collection Chardonnay 2013 Galilee

Unoaked. Salty and broad. Refreshing and not heavy. I assume that this had to be picked relatively early and depends for its freshness on very skilful work on the lees (or, then again, I could be completely wrong!). Anyway, the end result is very creditable. Again, as with the Sauvignon, I'd be delighted to drink this in Israel but I suspect it will be a bit more difficult to convince the great wide wine world outside Israel to pay for it. A little chewy on the end.

13%

Drink 2014-2016

15.5

Carmel, Selected Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Shomron

Mid crimson. Not that dense a colour. Light nose. Pretty tart finish and not that much fruit weight on the palate. But correct and fresh. Apparently this unoaked brand is a best seller in Israel.

14.5%

Drink 2014-2015

15

Carmel, Private Collection Merlot 2012 Galilee

This was aged for eight months in a mix of tank, French and American barrels.

There seems to me to be a hint of dank wood on the nose of this. Good fruity palate and a little concentration and structure but the tannins are a bit raw. You'd want to eat something to distract from the rather rasping finish. Somehow I can't put hummus out of my mind...

14.5%

Drink 2015-2016

15

Carmel, Private Collection Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Galilee

Aged for eight months in tanks, and American and French oak barrels.

Lively crimson. As with the Merlot, the oak does not smell 100% appetising; there is something a bit dank about it. Firm fruity attack and, unexpectedly, the tannins seem a little more friendly than on the Merlot. Just a tad skinny on the end. This is on the cusp of a score of 14.5 because of the nose.

14.5%

Drink 2014-2016

15

Carmel, Single Vineyard Sumaka Cabernet Sauvignon 2010 Galilee

Aged in French oak barrels for 16 months. Dark purplish crimson. Very correct if a bit rigid. Marked acidity which is a bit unexpected. (I tasted it alongside a 2010 red bordeaux retailing at around £22 and it lacked a bit of breadth.) But it is serious and refreshing, even if to be avoided without food. A balsamic note. It may well mellow.

14.5%

Drink 2015-2019

15.5

Carmel, Limited Edition 2010 Upper Galilee

54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Petit Verdot, 15% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 3% Malbec - a real Bordeaux blend! Each grape variety was vinified and aged separately for 16 months in French oak barrels.

Mid crimson. Very much more interesting on the nose than the Single Vineyard Cabernet. Round and creamy textured initially although it finished less than opulently. There is lift, though, and

no one could object to this well-balanced blend. I think it could perhaps have been more sumptuous with finer oak.

14.5%

Drink 2014-2020

16

Carmel, Single Vineyard, Kayoumi Vineyard Shiraz 2010 Upper Galilee

In French oak for 15 months. Mid crimson. Light, rather smudgy nose. Lively and with some sweet savoury oaky notes. Fresh and clean. Complete - no holes on the palate. Good balance; certainly not heavy, but not skinny either. Lightly leathery.

14.5%

Drink 2014-2018

16

Carmel, Mediterranean 2010 Upper Galilee

Very heavy broad bottle. 28% Shiraz, 24% Carignan, 24% Petit Verdot, 18% Petite Sirah, 3% Viognier. 'Small' French oak barrels for 16 months.

Dark crimson. Quite an intriguing nose. There is some sweetness at first and then a little bit of acidity at the end. Definite palate weight but good mastery of oak. (None of these wines is over-oaked.) Quite substantial, verging on heavy, with some sort of

spicy quality to it that is almost like cinnamon oil. Well-judged blend.

14.5%

Drink 2014-2018

16

Carmel, Single Vineyard Late Harvest Gewurztraminer 2009 Galilee

Half tapered bottle. Very strong Gewurz nose and admirable balance of sweetness and acid. Still very lively and without excess oiliness. Very successful. I would absolutely hate to be given this blind....

11.5%

Drink 2013-2016

16.5

YATIR

Situated in Tel Arad in the Negev, the winery was built in 2000 as a partnership between local growers and Carmel and is run independently of the parent company. It produces around 150,000 bottles a year. Winemaker Eran Goldwasser trained at Adelaide University and worked several vintages in Australia before returning to Israel to work for Carmel. Yatir own 45 ha

(111 acres) of vineyard, planted in 1996, at around 2,700 ft (900 m) elevation and surrounded by the Yatir Forest at the southern tip of the Judean Hills, making it considerably cooler than the rest of the Negev.

Yatir, Forest 2010 Judean Hills

This is the top label of Yatir, a label owned by Carmel but managed independently. 67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Petit Verdot, 8% Merlot.

Mid crimson. Pale rim. Racy, almost fragile fruit with some sweetness on the front palate and very chewy tannins. This is very punchy, full-on wine. A little ungracious but has lots of impact. This would sing out over any barbecue! Quite impressive persistence. If it's power you're after, go for this.

15%

15.5

Yatir 2009 Judean Hills

44% Shiraz, 34% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Lightish crimson. The fruit seems if anything to be fading on this one. It's a bit attenuated. Lacking a clear focus. But it is clean and fresh, if unappetisingly and awkwardly scrawny. Not nearly as appealing as its 2009 stablemates labelled Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

14%

Drink 2011-2014

14.5

Yatir Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 Judean Hills

85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Malbec, 7% Cabernet Franc.

Dark, purplish crimson. Much more appetising and focused than the Shiraz/Merlot/Cabernet blend. Good vibrant aromatic attack and real substance on the palate. Pure and fresh. Not the subtlest wine but textbook Cabernet. Good, positive finish and still with lots of life in it. Really vibrant.

14%

Drink 2013-2018

16

Yatir Syrah 2009 Judean Hills

Aged for 12 months in oak barrels. Brownish crimson with a pale rim. Rather toasty-sweet and appetising. Medium palate weight. The merest hint of BandAid, and a fresh finish. Very ample on the palate. Still some energy. Maybe could do with a little more exposure to oxygen during *élevage*?

14.5%

Drink 2014-2018

16