

Passover Wine - What a great obligation!

The Passover holiday celebration is an opportunity to enjoy fine wine. There is an obligation to drink four cups of wine at specific times during the Passover Seder. This is another reason “why this night is different from all other nights”! Mollie Stone’s wants to assist you in meeting this obligation.

Picking the right wine for your Passover Seder meal

Some people like to drink the traditional, ceremonial sweet kosher wine made from Concord grapes during the Seder. If that’s your preference, honor it. But if you are open to venturing beyond the traditional Concord grape wine, both for the ritual portions of the Seder and for the meal, there are many good options.

Let’s start with the Seder. With the first two cups of wine, you eat matza and several symbolic foods placed on the Passover Seder Plate, including bitter herbs, haroset (a sweet paste of fruits and nuts), and vegetables dipped in salt water. An *off-dry* (slightly sweet) white would be ideal for these first two cups.

In between the second and third ceremonial cups of wine, a main meal is served. It traditionally starts with chicken soup and gefilte fish with horseradish. These probably pair best with a *dry* white wine. That’s followed by a main course of roasted chicken, brisket of beef or roasted lamb along with potatoes, salads, and steamed or grilled vegetables. These pair best with several red wines suggested below. Lastly dessert is served consisting of cakes made with matzah meal, fresh fruit or dried fruits. These are also often paired with *off-dry* white wines.

In choosing wines for Passover, based on your beliefs, you have several choices: Kosher for Passover vs. Kosher but not specifically for Passover and *mevushal* vs. non-*mevushal* wines. Please see the “What Is Kosher Wine?” section below for more information on these distinctions.

Some suggested varietals

Off-dry White Wine - Popular ones for Passover include **Chenin Blanc** and **Asti Spumante**

Chenin Blanc can be *off-dry* with fruit tastes of apples, pear, melons and apricots and aromas of marzipan and straw flowers. World famous ones come from the Loire Valley in France. - **Asti Spumante** made with the Muscato grape is a lightly sparkling low alcohol wine from Italy. It’s a *semi-sweet* sparkler which is always a bit celebratory, and the taste is really pleasing with flavors of ripe peach, tangerine and lychee nut. It is also a favorite to pair with “white” fruit based desserts.

Dry White Wines - Suggested varietals include **Sauvignon Blanc** and **Chenin Blanc**.

Chenin Blanc also comes *dry* as a medium-high acid wine and has aromas of tart apple, pear, apricot and often with a creamy nutty nose and a honeyed finish. - **Sauvignon Blanc** is a high acid wine that has aromas of grapefruit, melon, pear and lemon, and sometimes with flavors of bell pepper and a steely finish.

Some suggested food pairings....

Roasted Chicken Pairings - Classic wine pairings include **Chardonnay** and **Pinot Noir**.

A **Chardonnay** would not only taste great but would go well with the celebration table, since white wine doesn’t stain as much as red if the kids spill a little. Chards have flavors of apples, pear, lemon/lime citrus, some tropical fruits, and often have oak aging influences of vanilla. - Great **Pinot Noirs** have aromas of red fruits: cherry, raspberry with tea, earthy herbs, and an oak aging which adds smoke and sweet spice. It’s a very versatile wine.

Brisket of Beef or Roasted Lamb Pairings - Classic wine pairings include **Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot** and **Syrah. Cab & Merlot** have flavors of dark berry: black cherry, blackberry, plum, and prune with a bit of vanilla. – **Syrah** (Shiraz) tastes of ripe blackberry with spice, black pepper and often an aroma of smoky baked earth with vanilla overtones.

What Is Kosher Wine?

Wines are made kosher so that blessings can be made on and over them. The word "*kosher*" means "proper" or "correct." The laws regarding wine have been refined and codified over the millennia by the rabbis to ensure maximal sanctity for this beverage. Kosher wine laws are the oldest winemaking laws in the world and predate any other wine laws by centuries. In them, the grape is placed above all other fruits because of the preciousness of wine and perhaps because the hand of man is not even needed to produce it. No organism harmful to humans can live in it, and it has been used medicinally throughout history.

Kosher wines do not require Jewish-owned vineyards as all grapes, being fruit, are inherently kosher. Kosher winemaking laws only come into force from the moment the grapes are crushed and the making of juice begins.

The Orthodox approach to kosher wine includes the following rules: All yeasts, filtering agents, or clarifying agents used must be certified as kosher. No milk or gelatin can be used for clarification. No artificial coloring or preservatives can be used. Kosher for Passover wine also must be made with a mold that has not been grown on bread.

Physical cleanliness, in addition to religious purity, is mandated. All equipment must be cleaned three times by modern steam cleaning and scalding hot water, and all barrels must be brand new and/or used exclusively for kosher wines. All equipment used to make the wine must be used to produce only kosher wines. If a wine is certified as "*kosher for Passover*," equipment and machinery must undergo special sanitizing procedures and can only be used for that purpose. **To be sure a wine is Kosher for Passover, check for the label saying it is or for the "P" symbol.** (Some are also labeled **Mehadrin** which literally means beautified or embellished and indicates the most stringent level of kosher supervision.)

Also there are classically two levels of kosher wine: normal kosher and one of which goes through one extra process step called *Mevushal* (Hebrew for cooked "meh-VOO-shul"). In order for a wine to be kosher, it must be created under a rabbi's immediate supervision, with only Sabbath-observant Jewish males involved in the growing of the grapes, the winemaking process, and the serving of the wine.

For wine to be kosher when served by a non-Jew, it must first be processed to be *Mevushal*. In the past, this involved boiling a wine creating a very disagreeable taste. In modern wine making, white and rosé wines that undergo *mevushal* are flash-pasteurized before the juice is fermented and reds immediately after fermentation. The pasteurization process occurs as either the juice or the wine is heated to 185°F/85°C for a few moments and then cooled very quickly. Recent U.C. Davis studies have shown that modern *mevushal* wines do not even come close to the time and temperature threshold at which a wine drinker can perceive any difference in color, nose, or taste of the wine.

Some Mollie Stone's Passover Wine Specials

Producer	Varietals	Vintage	Appellation	Kosher	Profile
Yarden	Pinot Noir	2007	Golan Heights, Galilee, Israel	For Passover, Kosher Lamehadrin	Light ruby color, aromas of candied red cherry, blue berry, pomegranate, some anise spice. Earthy & complex medium weight with a darker streak.
Covenant Wines, "Lavan"	Chardonnay	2010	Russian River Valley, CA	For Passover	Rich full bodied with ripe apple, citrus and vanillin oak aromas. A good balance of acid & round mouth feels which should please CA style lovers.
Baron Herzog	Chardonnay	2006	Central Coast	For Passover & Mevushal	Aromas of ripe apple, with some tropical citrus notes, fresh palate cleansing acidity and restrained oak treatment.
Barkan Classic	Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Galil, Israel	For Passover & Mevushal	Ruby red color, medium weight CAB with a bouquet of spicy red berry aromas, some oak, tea notes and soft smooth tannin structure. A food friendly Cabernet.
"Red C," Covenant Wines	Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Napa Valley, CA	For Passover	Dark ruby color, full body wine with extracted, complex mix of dark cherry, plum, black licorice and roasted herb notes, with dense and chalky tannins. A full throated Cabernet.