



The **New** Israel

Biblical Grapes Meet Orange Wines in a Bubbling Mediterranean Melting Pot

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Cultural Diversity in Israel



Where
the Mediterranean
begins



Israeli Wine 101

- Israel: A very small country (less square mileage than New Jersey) situated along the Eastern Mediterranean
- Israel is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and surrounded by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt to the north, west and south
- A small producer: 14,000 acres planted to vines (less than 1/3 of Napa Valley's 45,000 acres)
- About 300 wineries

Climate

- Mediterranean (rainy winters, dry hot summers)
- Long hours of summer sunshine
- Coast is hot, windy and humid
- Mountains influence climate inland
- Shortage of water (irrigation essential almost everywhere)

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Israeli Wine 101

Geography:

- Coastal plain
- Hilly mountainous region to the East
- The Jordan Rift Valley (part of the Syrian – East African Rift)
- Negev Desert in south

Terroir:

- Hot, sunny and dry (= grape ripeness)
- High elevation rocky soils (moderates climate, reduces yield, adds minerality)
- Volcanic basalt in North
- Terra Rosa on the coast
- Chalky limestone-rich clays in foothills



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History of Israeli Winemaking

Ancient History

Winemaking began in the triangle between the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Galilee. 5,000 years of winemaking took place (2,000 years before the vine reached Europe).

Modern History

After the Muslim conquest in 700CE and the founding of the Ottoman Empire, the once thriving wine industry withered during Prohibition. Vineyards were uprooted.

1880's-90's

Jews started returning to Israel. Winemaking was supported and financed by the Frenchman Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who was owner of Château Lafite. He founded the Israeli wine industry, planted vineyards, built large wineries with deep underground cellars and sent French winemakers and agronomists.

1980's

100 years later, Californian expertise was imported to bring about a New World wine revolution, introducing modern techniques in both winery and vineyard.

1990's

Small wineries making wines with passion and individuality heralded the start of a boutique winery boom, which has continued until today.

2000's

Israeli wine became more terroir driven, making wine from single vineyards, and identifying characteristics from individual plots within a vineyard.

THE ISRAEL WINE MAP



Israel's Official Wine Regions

The official wine regions of Israel are Galilee, Shomron, Samson, Judean Hills and the Negev.

- Galilee – Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee, Golan Heights
- Shomron – Mt. Carmel, Menashe Hills, Shomron Hills
- Samson – Central Coastal Plain, Judean Foothills
- Judean Hills – the hills to the west, north & south of Jerusalem
- Negev – the Negev Highlands

These were decided long before the Israel wine industry took its current shape. There are proposals to change and update these to fit in with the realities of today.

Israeli Terroir

Israel, like many long thin countries, has a surprising number of microclimates.



It is possible to ski in the morning on Mount Hermon in the north, and in the afternoon go scuba diving to see the Coral Reef in the Red Sea resort of Eilat.

Likewise, it is possible to be in the Central Mountains at an altitude of over 3,200 feet, and a short time afterward to fall away to the Judean Desert, where the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth at -1300 feet below sea level, is situated.

The coastal areas were the traditional wine regions, where the bulk of vineyards were originally planted and they formed the basis of Israeli wine for a hundred years or so. With the quality revolution, the vineyard areas moved northwards and eastwards in search of higher elevation. This was when the cooler areas of the Golan Heights, Upper Galilee and the Judean Hills became known for producing quality wines.

Israel's Grape Varieties

Important Grape Varieties:

Red grapes comprise 75-80%

1. Cabernet Sauvignon
2. Carignan
3. Merlot
4. Syrah
5. Petit Verdot

Unique Varieties:

Over 120 Indigenous (I) and hybrid (H) grapes

1. Dabouki (I - White)
2. Hamdani/Marawi (I – White)
3. Jandali (I – White)
4. Argaman (H – Red)
5. Baladi Asmar (I – Red)
6. Bittuni (I – Red)



Dalton Winery Pét-Nat 2018, Upper Galilee



This Pét-Nat (Pétillant-Naturel) is a great example of the current experimentation going on in the Israeli wine scene. Dalton was one of Israel's pioneering wineries to explore the use of Mediterranean varieties and their head winemaker Guy Eshel (U.C. Davis trained) is given a certain amount of wine by owner Alex Haruni so he can experiment with various techniques such as natural winemaking.

This wine is majority Semillon coming from sustainable vineyards in the mountainous area of Upper Galilee which is known for its mixture of volcanic, gravel and terra rossa soils with some parts having limestone.

Semillon began fermenting in tank with native yeast and just before completion was blended with a small amount of sweet Muscat of Alexandria and transferred to bottle where it completed fermentation. The fermentation in the bottle causes the wine to be effervescent and also slightly cloudy.

The wine has aromas of fresh bread and honeysuckle with grapefruit and green apple flavors that has a lively, bright finish.

Dalton Winery

Established in 1995 by father Mat and Alex Haruni, the two identified the potential of the Upper Galilee, envisioning it as a premium wine producing region. Dalton is one of the few wineries that is surrounded by its own vineyards.

Dalton is a big believer in innovation and over the years they have pioneered single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah at high altitudes as high as 2460 feet (750 meters) as well as increasing the popularity of single varietals wines such as Petite Sirah, Chenin Blanc, Semillon and Grenache.

They have found ammonite fossils in some of their estate vineyards which were marine mollusc animals that became extinct around 66 million years ago.



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Recanati Winery Reserve Marawi 2017, Central Mountains (Judean Hills)



Recanati Winery is owned by Lenny Recanati, a native of Israel with ancestral roots stretching back to Italy, and this winery fulfills Lenny's life-long dream to produce truly world-class wines. His chief winemaker Gil Shatsberg (U.C. Davis trained) has helped make Recanati one of the most heralded Israeli wines in the US as well as Israel.

The variety Marawi (Arabic) , also known as Hamdani (Hebrew) is one of a handful of ancient indigenous varieties that are being researched in Israel and Recanati has been placing a focus in finding and working with indigenous varieties such as this Marawi first commercially released in 2014 and now they have a red indigenous variety on the market called Bittuni.

This Marawi is actually sourced from a vineyard in Palestine located in the region of the Judean Hills in Bethlehem. The grapes are dry farmed at 2460 feet (750 meters) from a small 1.5 acre (.6 hectare) vineyard from 30 year old vines. The vineyards has limestone and clay soils and the grapes are hand harvested.

They are still experimenting with this wine trying to find the ideal expression of varietal characteristics and sense of place and the 2015 was more mineral driven while the 2016 had more stone fruit and this 2017 has a combination of the flinty minerality, juicy apricot, lanolin and honeysuckle notes with a hint of spice from its time in one year old French oak.

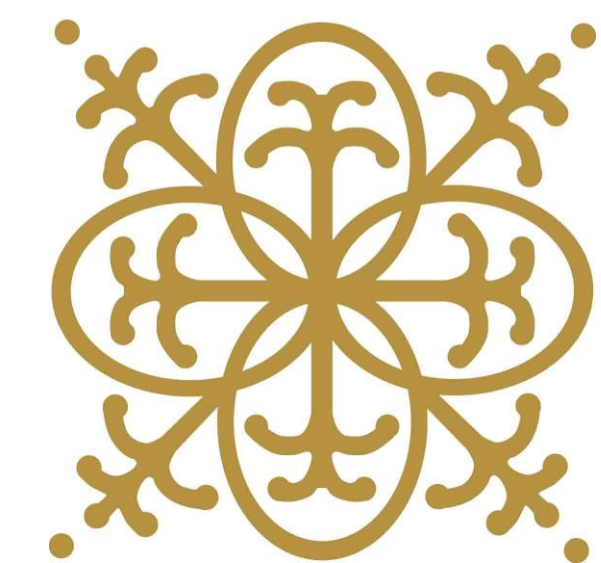
Recanati Winery

Recanati has been considered one of the top Israeli wine producers in the US for years receiving praise from top wine critics. Their decision to focus on more Mediterranean varieties such as a Roussanne and Marsanne blend as well as old bush vine Carignan, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Marselan has garnered them tons of praise; their recent focus on finding and producing ancient indigenous varieties has also brought them into the spotlight for not only rescuing and developing these grapes that are part of Israel's past of making wines over 5,000 years ago but also for being an ideal example of hope by working with a Palestinian farmer.

Also, they just planted new vineyards in 2016 in the Upper Galilee wine region at an elevation of 2133 feet (650 meters) that they are farming biodynamic; they have a Demeter inspection coming up in January of 2020. They have planted bush vine Carignan, an experimental amount of Marawi and Argaman - an Israeli wine grape that is a crossing of Souzão and Carignan.



RECANATI
— WINERY —



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Jezreel Valley Winery Argaman 2016, Central Mountains (Jezreel Valley)



Jezreel Valley Winery is a boutique producer that was established in 2012 by founders Jacob Ner-David and Yehuda Nahar with a goal of creating wines that have a unique statement and they have done that by becoming a specialist of the Argaman variety (an Israeli wine grape that is a crossing of Souzão and Carignan, and they have received high praise for their efforts.

These grapes are sourced from the agricultural moshav, Givat Nili, that is referred to as the “Tuscany of Israel” because it is a small village surrounded by vineyards, fruit trees and gardens. It is a single vineyard located in the Central Mountains area in Israel that is hand harvested.

This wine aged 15 months in 300L second year French oak.

This Argaman has a deep ruby color and soft tannins which is characteristic of the variety with juicy wild berries, forest floor and singed rosemary with a lovely freshness on the finish.

Jezreel Valley Winery

Jezreel Valley Winery, located in the Jezreel Valley, has become one of the hottest recent wineries in Israel causing tons of excitement over their Argaman, Carignan and their two Pét-Nat wines about to hit the market: a white made from the indigenous variety Dabuki and French Colombard and a rosé made from Grenache that was just released.

The founders, Yehuda Nahar and Jacob Ner-David, state that they have a goal of establishing a high quality winery that would combine traditional winemaking with their love for the land and modern Israel which obvious expresses itself in making wines rooted in tradition yet has an open-minded approach.

They have also hired consulting winemaker Ari Erle who trained at Napa boutique wineries and he is helping them to accomplish this exciting goal that is taking Israel wine scene by storm.



JEZREEL

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Somek Estate Winery Carignan 2011, Central Mountains (Mt. Carmel)



Somek Estate Winery was founded by Barak and Hila Dahan in 2002 with the aim of producing quality wines that reflect the terroir of the Zichron Ya'acov in Mt. Carmel which benefits from the southern Carmel Mountain range and cooling breezes off the Mediterranean. The winery only uses grapes from their family vineyard cultivated since 1882.

The wine is from a single vineyard estate of 40 year old Carignan.

It was aged for 24 months in French oak and allowed to age in bottle for two years before being released. Some bottles have been held back such as this 2011 so to offer older vintages to the market.

This Carignan has an intense minerality that has notes of limestone and brambly berries with wild sage with hints of baking spice and fine-grained tannins.

Somek Estate Winery

The owner, Barak Dahan, is a 5th generation vintner in Zichron Ya'akov, Mt. Carmel, as his ancestors first came to this town in 1882 to work on Baron Rothschild's newly established vineyards at the time; and his family has been growing Carignan for five generations.

Barak carries on the Old World tradition passed on from his grandfather who taught him how to care for the vines; Barak's wife, Hila, holds a Masters in Viticulture and Oenology from the University of Adelaide, Australia, and so they are a dynamic duo together.

All stages of production are handled by members of the family – from selection of grapes, barrels and blends, to bottling, marketing and distribution. They produce only 80,000 bottles a year.



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Hayotzer, Arza Winery, Lyrica GSM 2016, Central Mountains (Judean Hills)



Hayotzer Winery is the boutique of the Shor family, who established their first winery in 1847 in the Old City of Jerusalem. The winery operates on the belief that wine is a work of creative art representing the person who made it and the place where it's grown.

These grapes come from the area of the Judean Hills in the Central Mountains and has warm days and cooling winds from the Mediterranean that moderate the temperature with cool nights. The soils are thin terra rossa and stony on a bedrock of limestone. The vineyards in the Judean Hills are planted among nature reserves and fossils in the area show the ancient history of this region.

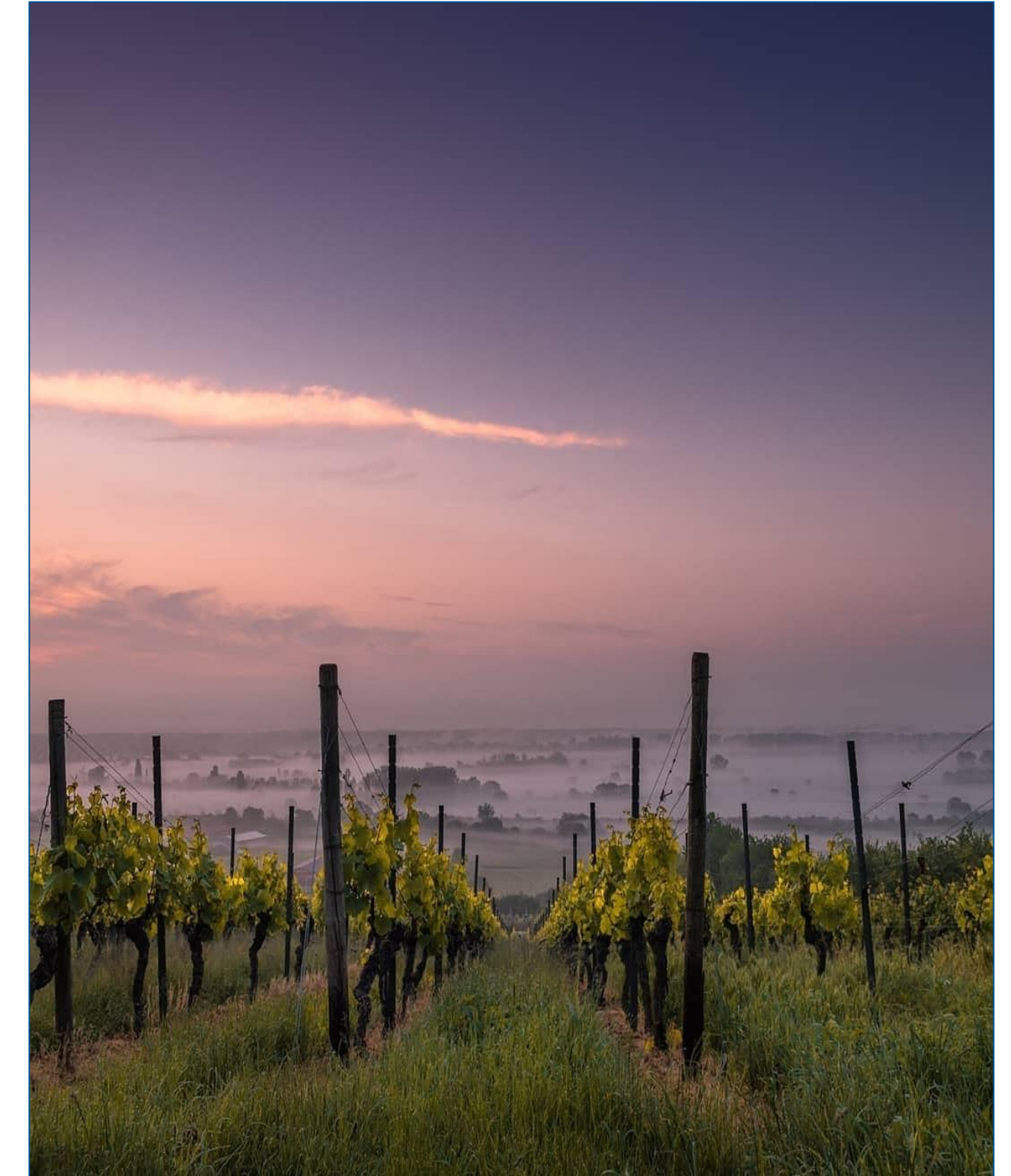
This is a blend of 40% Grenache, 35% Syrah and 25% Mourvèdre that was aged in French oak barrels for 18 months.

Delicious nose of crushed stones and black cherry with notes of fresh flowers, Herbes de Provence and juicy blackberry on silky texture.

Arza's Boutique Hayotzer Winery

The Shor family, who own the historic Arza winery that has deep roots in the Israeli wine story, established this boutique winery Hayotzer (Hebrew for “creator”) as they firmly believe that wine is an art and that the winemaker is the artist. They appointed Philippe Lichtenstein as winemaker.

Philippe Lichtenstein is French born, he is an extremely experienced winemaker that makes Old World style as he also studied wine at Montpellier University and worked in the South of France until he moved to Israel. He worked at a few other wineries in Israel until making a name for himself and finally found the ideal partnership with the Shor family creating the new boutique winery Hayotzer.



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Golan Heights Winery Yarden 2T 2014, Golan Heights

Golan Heights Winery was established in 1983 by four kibbutzim and four moshavim (cooperative communities). The winery has planted 20+ grape varieties in 28 vineyards divided into roughly 450 blocks, at elevations ranging from 1310 to almost 3940 feet (400-1200 meters) on the volcanic slopes of the Golan Heights.

This is a red blend of the Portuguese varieties Touriga Nacional and Tinta Cão made famous by the high quality wines of the Douro Valley.

The grapes were harvested from two vineyards in the Golan Heights: Springs Vineyard at 2300 feet (700 meters) above sea level and Geshur Vineyard at 1300 feet (400 meters).

This Yarden 2T was aged for 18 months in (40% new) French oak barrels.

This 2T has a real silky texture with good mid-palate weight of ripe black cherry and blackberry fruit yet has an overall sense of finesse that was highlighted by a smoldering earth and spice cake notes. A wine with real weight yet very food friendly.

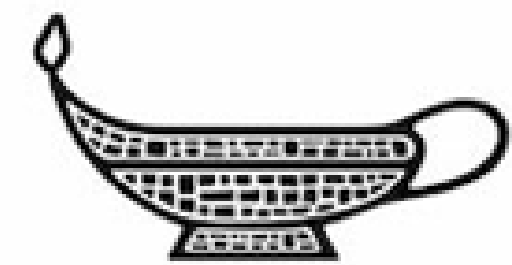


Golan Heights Winery

Victor Schoenfeld is the head winemaker and considered one of the best in Israel yet he is very down to earth. He started at the Golan Heights Winery in 1992 after graduating from U.C. Davis, as he was born and raised in California. He did not initially intend to stay in Israel but once he realized that this winery would be a big part in helping to pioneer quality Israeli wines he made his home there.

In 2006 the Golan Heights Winery realized that there was an issue with widespread viruses in Israel's vineyards (leafroll virus) and so they set up a mission to establish the availability of virus-free, high quality vines. In 2008 they decided to establish a vine propagation block under the direct management and ownership of the winery and they partnered with ENTAV-INRA - the world's largest and oldest bank for grapevine raw materials.

The area of the Golan Heights is not only one of the coldest areas in Israel but it also feels like the Old West with wild horses galloping freely along the wide open, volcanic plains.



GOLAN HEIGHTS WINERY

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Tabor Winery Malkiya Cabernet Sauvignon 2014, Upper Galilee



Tabor Winery was founded in 1999 in the Galilee region by four families of grape growers who have been growing grapes uninterrupted for over five generations.

This Cabernet Sauvignon comes from a single vineyard at an elevation of 2382 feet (726 meters) on Mount Malkiya in the Upper Galilee. The topsoil is terra rossa but underneath, only eight inches (20 centimeters) down, is one of the most unique soils Tabor's viticulturalist, Michal Akerman, has ever seen in Israel. In English, it is called "a lot of stars" since there are limestone rocks throughout the soil that gives the visual impression of this name. She said that it was a piece of land that many of the local people thought to be undesirable for any type of crop, but that she somehow, to their amazement, was able to produce the best Cabernet Sauvignon she has ever seen.

The grapes were hand-picked and only the free-run juice was used and then aged for 18 months in new French oak barrels with an additional one year of aging in bottle.

This wine has a nose of blackcurrant leaves and cloves that has a stony minerality with well-knit tannin and juicy cassis flavors that has an overall sense of elegance.

Tabor Winery

Tabor's agronomist and viticulturalist, Michal Akerman, is starting a "Viticulture Revolution" that will not only increase biodiversity within their own vineyards but in various types of farms throughout Israel.

The Society of the Preservation of Nature in Israel (SPNI) approached Michal to see if Tabor would be willing to work with them to make their vineyards friendlier to biodiversity.

And Michal and Tabor took on the challenge by planting 400 trees, building safe havens for smaller animals as well as leaving the gates open (when the grapes are not ripe) to welcome larger animals and they started to create a "cycle of life" over the past seven years.

Also, she implemented less chemical spraying allowing good predatory insects to come back and stopped spraying herbicides to allow a natural cover crop between the vines to grow.

The increase of biodiversity created a healthy environment for the vines as not only do they spray less, suffer less erosion, no longer have to use fertilizer but they no longer have to irrigate most vineyards as the average roots of the vine has gone from one foot deep to 23-25 feet deep. She believes this will help Israel to keep vines longer as right now they typically replant after 15 years.

The next thing on the horizon to look forward to is Michal growing Malbec and Chenin Blanc in desert conditions in the Negev wine region in the area of Mitzpe Ramon. This area has a very unique microclimate due to the Ramon Crater – the world's largest erosion crater.



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