



Castel Vertical

15.02.2011

In a unique event, Eli Ben Zaken hosted the main wine critics of Israel and four very special international guests to a vertical tasting of Castel's finest wines.

Domaine du Castel was founded in 1992 by Eli Ben Zaken at Ramat Raziel in the Jerusalem mountains, west of Jerusalem. His first vintage was a mere 600 bottles. He now produces over 100,000, and runs the business with his sons, Ariel & Eytan.

Castel usually produces just three wines. The Castel Grand Vin is the first label. It is a Bordeaux style blend, sometimes containing all five Bordeaux varieties. Petit Castel is the second label, where Merlot is the dominant variety. Their white wine is an exquisitely balanced Burgundian-style Chardonnay, named 'C' Blanc du Castel. In one vintage only, he also produced a Rose.

During the last 18 years Castel has received many accolades, which have heralded the wine revolution in Israel.

The first 1992 Castel vintage was 'found' by Serena Sutcliffe MW, head of the wine department at Sothebys, who called it the finest Israeli wine she had ever tasted.

In the late 1990's the Castel Grand Vin became the first Israeli wine to be selected as Wine of The Month, by the English magazine Decanter. This was a feat they repeated three times.

The 'C' Blanc du Castel 2003 was the first Israeli wine to receive 90 points or more in the Wine Spectator, the world's most famous wine magazine. The 2005 scored 91 points in Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, the highest score ever given by Robert Parker or Mark Squires, for an Israeli dry white wine.

The Castel Grand Vin 2008 scored 93 points in Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, equaling the highest score ever received for an Israeli red wine.

In fact each of Castel's three wines have, at onetime or another, received 90 points or more from Robert Parker. The Grand Vin has done so five times, the 'C' Bland du Castel has achieved this three times, and even the Petit Castel has been awarded 90 points on two occasions.

So for the connoisseur and wine lover, it certainly was a special occasion. The wines tasted were:

'C' Blanc du Castel 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 (from the barrel)

Rose du Castel 2009

Petit Castel 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007

Castel Grand Vin 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010 (from the barrel)



The foreign guests invited to participate in the tasting included some of the world's most famous wine personalities:

Michel Bettane, France's most famous wine critic

Jan Van Lissom, the most influential wine personality in the Netherlands

Jeannie Cho Lee, from Hong Kong, one of very few Masters of Wines from the Far East

Robert Joseph, editor of Wine Business International

There are three publications which summarize Domaine du Castel's achievements in putting Israel on the wine map spread across the oceans.

In France: Castel was featured in Michel Bettane's book, 'The World's Greatest Wines', and was the only Israeli winery included.

In England: Castel was awarded four stars – the maximum possible, in Hugh Johnson's Pocket Wine Book, the highest award possible.

In America: the Grand Vin Castel 2008 was awarded 93 points in Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, equaling the highest score ever by an Israeli wine.