



The Recanati Winery is currently celebrating its tenth birthday, as well as the fact that in just ten years it has become one of Israel's leading wineries, producing a large variety of excellent wines, some of which have won prizes / Liza Rosenberg

The sweet scent of wine and grapes wafts through the air upon entering the Recanati Winery in Emek Hefer, allowing you to forget for a moment that you're in an Israeli industrial zone south of Hadera.

The Recanati Winery was founded by businessman and wine connoisseur Lenny Recanati and several partners, and the decision to do so had more to do with a passion for wine than financial considerations. "Whoever starts a winery wanting to be a millionaire had better start out with a little extra," says Gil Shatsberg with a grin. Shatsberg is the winery's affable and extremely knowledgeable head winemaker, a position he has held since January 2008.

The winery first opened its doors in the year 2000, beginning with 220 tons of Chardonnay grapes harvested from a vineyard at Kerem Ben-Zimra. Following that harvest, Recanati produced its first batch of 200,000 bottles in August 2001. That number has since increased fivefold, and in the past year the winery produced approximately one million bottles of wine. "The wine has been very well accepted here and it has sold," notes Shatsberg. "This has enabled us to substantially increase production every year."

#### From vine to wine

When the winery began production a decade ago, it worked with approximately five different vineyards. Today, it uses grapes harvested from more than 20 different vineyards. Most of these are in northern communities such as Manara, Kerem Ben-Zimra, Merhaviva, Givat Ada and Ram-On, while others are farther south in Lachish

and the Judean Hills. Some of the grapes are mechanically harvested, but most are harvested by hand.

Recanati harvested 1,000 tons of grapes this year, and according to Shatsberg, this year's harvest was earlier than usual, due to the lack of rain late in the season. The winery is quite precise in its winemaking process, using many different tanks in a variety of sizes, which allows for a range of different qualities and levels to be achieved, and ensures that logistical problems are kept to a minimum.

Barrels are a very big expense for the winery, and Shatsberg and his team like to experiment with different barrel types. Barrels are primarily made from French oak, though some American oak barrels are also used. "Our constant goal is to keep improving the wine and mastering the vineyards," says Shatsberg. "We are striving to maintain the style of good Israeli wine rather than imitate other countries' wines. We don't try to make French wine or Italian wine," he adds.

#### Worldwide exports

The winery initially targeted the domestic market, but today exports comprise 25-30% of all sales. It's not easy to export Israeli wines, and some markets are less receptive in the current political climate. Currently, Recanati wines are being sold in such countries as the United States (since 2002), Japan (since 2004), France (first large-scale exports were in 2007), England and Canada. In the winter of 2010, the winery began exporting to Germany, Poland, Italy, Sweden and Greece, among others.





Recanati's Manara vineyard

Most Israeli wine exports are consumed by Jewish communities around the world. Given that Recanati wines are kosher, most – though not all – of its sales tend to go to the Jewish market as well.

According to CEO Noam Jacoby, one exception to this trend is the US market. The winery's US importer is a general distributor, and does not focus primarily on the Jewish market. This means that in addition to the usual Jewish venues, Recanati wines are penetrating more non-traditional markets in the US, including non-Jewish restaurants and shops. "Our wine is even being sold at The Grand Central Oyster Bar in New York City, which isn't exactly your typical Jewish environment," says Jacoby with a smile. Adds Shatsberg, "people know there are good wines that happen to be kosher, but it's an ongoing uphill battle. The wine market is usually quite conservative and takes years to penetrate."

Domestically, the winery is trying to focus on the restaurant market, as this has proven to be a successful way to promote wines. "When people are in a restaurant and have a good experience with our wine, it gives us an advantage," remarks Jacoby.

In addition, the winery's marketing strategy also includes connecting wine to art, which is why the winery sponsors events such as "Fresh Paint," an annual contemporary art fair held in Tel Aviv. "Supporting these events allows us to help create a strong combination of art with wine, and also enables us to try a different approach in marketing to consumers," notes Jacoby.

### For every occasion

Since the beginning, the winery has focused on producing high quality wines at affordable prices. Says Jacoby, "the quality of our wine is very good – we have won medals, and the critics say that we provide very good value as well as a good price-to-quality ratio." Four dif-

ferent labels are produced – Yasmin, Recanati, Reserve and Special Reserve – and each label occupies a different niche in the wine market.

The Yasmin label is produced from basic blends that haven't been barrel-aged, allowing the winery to maintain high quality at very affordable prices. Under this label, the winery makes varietal blends of both red and white wine, which can often be found at hotels, restaurants and catered events, both in Israel and abroad.

The Recanati label is, according to Shatsberg, the winery's "bread and butter label," offering affordable, very high quality wines that have been oak-aged and are suitable for everyday use. This label contains both red and white varieties, and wines produced under this label include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Rosé, Shiraz, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Shatsberg and Jacoby like to highlight the fact that Recanati is among the leaders of what they refer to as the "rosé revolution." Says Shatsberg, "Prior to Recanati producing this particular type of wine, rosé did not have a very good reputation in Israel, as several wineries used leftovers from other types of wine to create their rosé. We changed the concept to create a quality product." Penetrating the market was an uphill battle, but Recanati's rosé is now selling very well in restaurants, and is recognized as a rosé market leader. "It's interesting," remarks Jacoby, "as rosé is so well-suited to the Israeli climate, yet it never really sold in Israel prior to this 'revolution.'"

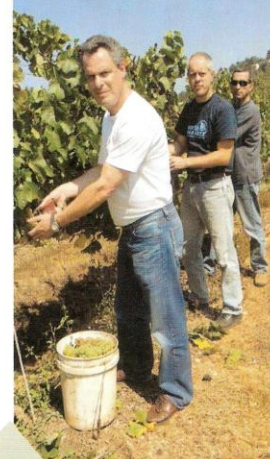
Wine buffs might be interested to learn that Recanati's rosé wine is actually a byproduct of the Second Lebanon War. The vineyard that was producing the winery's Cabernet Franc wine (from the Recanati Reserve label, see below) was situated along the northern border. As a result of being under fire, the vineyard was forced to harvest early because workers couldn't properly maintain the crops and grapes were unable to reach full ripeness. This



### Happy 10th Birthday!

In June, the Recanati Winery launched the celebrations marking its first decade of existence with a special concert at the beautiful Shoni Fortress near Binyamina. Israel's leading female singers performed at the event, including Ilanit, Gali Atari, Leah Shabbat, Miri Messika, Margalit Tzanani, Corinne Elal and Rita.

The celebrations will continue and you can expect refreshing surprises such as new and unique wines, collaborations with chefs from select restaurants and various cultural events involving wine.

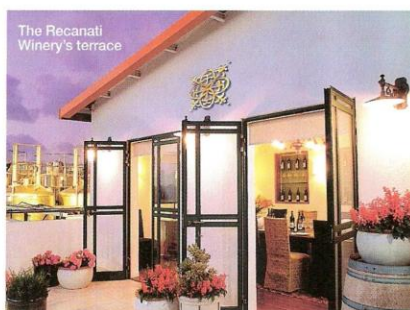


Lenny Recanati in one of the winery's vineyards



RECANATI  
PRODUCED ITS  
FIRST BATCH OF  
200,000 BOTTLES  
IN AUGUST 2001.  
THAT NUMBER  
HAS SINCE  
INCREASED  
FIVE-FOLD

THE SPECIAL  
RESERVE LABEL  
IS THE WINERY'S  
FLAGSHIP WINE,  
AND IS ALWAYS  
PRODUCED  
USING A BLEND  
OF THE BEST  
GRAPES



The Recanati Winery's terrace

early harvest resulted in the first bottles of rosé being produced by Recanati.

The Reserve label is designated as such because the grapes are harvested from single vineyards, blocks or areas. This is done because Shatsberg and his team believe that the grapes in that area are of a high enough quality to be called a reserve. The wines produced under this label – like those from the Recanati label – are aged in oak barrels, but for a longer period than the Recanati line. Wines produced for the Reserve label include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Syrah - Zinfandel, Cabernet Franc and Syrah.

The Special Reserve label is the winery's flagship wine, and is always produced using a blend of the best grapes. During the barrel selection process, the contents of the barrels are tasted and only the highest quality wines are used. The Special Reserve wine is produced only during select years when the wines are of a unique quality, and was first produced in 2005, using grapes harvested in 2001. In honor of the winery's tenth anniversary celebrations, a Special Reserve white wine has been added to the label's traditional red wine.

According to Shatsberg, the winery is aiming to reach the entire population of wine drinkers and, therefore, must be able to satisfy sophisticated wine connoisseurs at the highest levels. "Obviously, this is going to be more challenging," says Shatsberg, "but it's also more fun."

#### Award-winning wines

In just one decade, the Recanati Winery has managed to accumulate an impressive number of accolades, winning numerous medals in major wine competitions both in Israel and around the world, most notably in France, England and Italy. The winery won its first medal as early

as 2003, taking home a gold medal for a Merlot Reserve from the year 2000 in the Vinalies International Paris competition.

Over the years, the winery has continued to impress critics and judges alike, winning medals in competitions like the Citadelles Du Vin in Bordeaux, the Challenge Du Vin in Paris, Terravino, Decanter, IWSC in London and others. In 2008, the winery won five gold medals for five different wines at Eshkol Hazahav, Israel's most prestigious wine competition. It was the first time in the competition's history that a single winery received so many medals at once.

The wines produced by Recanati are widely recognized, and the perception is that Recanati is a very large winery. The winery is actually medium-sized by Israeli standards. "People think we've been around for centuries, when in reality, it's only been one decade," says Jacoby. "From our point of view, it's very good for our image that people think we're bigger than we really are."

#### Visions for the future

According to Shatsberg and Jacoby, the winery has always looked for ways to move to a locale more in keeping with its vision that a winery should be surrounded by vineyards. Given that it is considered an industrial winery, finding such an arrangement will not be easy, as laws dictate that wineries producing more than 100,000 bottles be located in industrial zones.

As the winery has already reached maximum production levels in the current facility, a move appears to be inevitable, and the race is on to find a location that will allow Lenny Recanati and his staff to combine nature and industry. In addition, the winery currently does what it can to be environmentally friendly, and the new facility will take this even further as environmental aspects are taken into consideration from the start. "We are investigating possibilities for producing organic wine, which involves a long transition period," notes Jacoby.

Says owner Lenny Recanati, "during the harvest season of 2000, we started the big project – the Recanati Winery. The vision of establishing a leading winery which produces quality wines at excellent value was realized in its entirety. I can only look towards the coming decades and hope that we will continue to plant new varieties and develop new unique blends which express the tastes of the Land of Israel and the local terroir. And of course we hope to continue conquering new markets, to grow at an impressive rate and to produce the excellent wines that we know how to produce for many more years to come." ●