

[Clos de Gat: My Annual Visit With Tasting Notes](#)



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This morning (Wednesday, 16 December 2009) I made my way by train (I do enjoy the trains) to Beit Shemesh, from there to make my way to the Clos de Gat winery for my annual tasting visit.

Located on Kibbutz Har'el in the Jerusalem Mountains, this joint project of the kibbutz and Australian-trained winemaker Eyal Rotem released its first wines from the 2001 vintage. The name "Clos de Gat" is a play on words—the French clos is an enclosed vineyard surrounded by stone walls or windbreaks, while the Hebrew gat is an antique wine press. Grapes come from the winery's own vineyards, which now include Cabernet, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Syrah and Chardonnay. Production for 2008 was of about 60,000 bottles and for 2009 about 70,000. The winery releases wines in three series, Sycra (Aramaic for "bright red"), the Bordeaux-blend Clos de Gat, and Har'el. From the 2003 vintage, all but the Chanson wines have been made with wild yeasts.

Several of the wines I tasted are in the process of making their way to market and others will be released in the next few months. As was seen during the course of my tastings, the winery comfortably maintains its five stars in my Israeli wine guide, that indicating a world-class winery, one regularly producing excellent wines. My thanks to Eyal Rotem and William White for their courtesies during my visit. Also a vote of appreciation to the two quite large dogs and plum grey cat who greeted me with warmth.

Best
Rogov

Clos de Gat, Chanson, 2009: The usual blend for this wine of Chardonnay, Semillon, Viognier and Chenin Blanc (this year in proportions of 65%, 25%, 7% and 3% respectively). Unoaked and not subjected to malolactic fermentation, deep gold in color, with medium- to full-body, finely tuned balancing acidity. On first attack fresh apricots, those yielding nicely to notes of citrus and minerals and, on the long finish a hint of guava. Simultaneously easy to drink and complex. Drink now-2012. NIS 90. Score 91. (Tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Chardonnay, 2008: Made entirely from Chardonnay grapes, fermented on wild yeasts and with no battonage in French oak barriques in which the wine developed for 12 months. As at barrel tastings, showing full-bodied, rich, complex and opulent, with fig, citrus and melon fruits, those on a background of minerals and butterscotch. Deep gold in color, and on the long finish rising notes of kumquats and minerals. Drink now-2014. NIS 150. Score 93. (Re-tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Syrah, Har'El, 2008: Showing every bit as well as at barrel tastings. Blended with 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and developed for 15 months in barriques, showing super-dark garnet towards royal purple. Full-bodied, with generous but softly caressing tannins making the wine more than approachable despite its youth. Opens to show blackcurrant and blueberry fruits, those parting to make way for blackberries and black cherries with gentle hints of black pepper and grilled meat rising on the remarkably long finish. Thoroughly enjoyable even now but best 2011-2017. NIS 120. Score 93. (Re-tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Cabernet Sauvignon, Har'El, 2008: Once again, no let-down at all from earlier barrel tastings. Deep, dark and intensely tannic, a rich, full-bodied red showing fine balance and structure, reflecting its 12 months in barriques with spicy and vanillatinged oak and still firm tannins yielding to highlight well-focused blackberry, blackcurrant and black cherry fruits. On the long finish, with chewy tannins rising, tempting notes of licorice, mint and bitter almonds. Approachable now but best 2012-2017. NIS 120. Tentative Score 94. (Re-tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Merlot, Har'El, 2008: A wine that has developed very nicely indeed since barrel tastings. An intense wine, as far as you can get from the "internationalized Merlot" that has become so ubiquitous. Deep, almost impenetrable garnet, full-bodied, with still firm tannins and spicy wood reflecting its youth, those in fine balance with fruits and natural acidity and showing fine qualities for cellaring. On first attack blackberries and black cherries, those yielding to clear notes of white chocolate, mint and spices, all lingering through to a long and generous finish. Remarkable rich and approachable now but best from 2011-2018. NIS 150. Score 94. (Re-tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Ayalon Valley, 2006: As we have come to know this wine, a Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot, and showing a clear kinship to the releases of 2004 and 2005. Full-bodied, with generous but soft and gently gripping tannins, notes of spices and a hint of smoke from the wood in which it aged. On first attack blackcurrants and blackberries, those yielding to blueberries and clear notes of espresso coffee. On the long finish, tannins rise together with notes of red licorice. Intense, complex and worthy of cellaring. Approachable now but best from 2011-2018. NIS 160. Score 94. (Re-tasted 16 Dec 2009)

Clos de Gat, Merlot, Sycra, 2006 Full bodied, reflecting its 20 months in new oak with generous spicy wood and equally generous but softly mouth-coating tannins, those in fine balance with fruits and acidity. Opens with currant, purple plum and mocha notes, those yielding to blackberry, citrus peel and light herbal and tobacco overtones. Drink now-2014. Score 93.

Clos de Gat, Syrah, Sycra, 2006 An opulent wine, almost impenetrably deep garnet in color, full bodied, with silky smooth tannins that caress gently and opening in the glass to reveal aroms and flavors of wild berries, grilled meat and spices, those leading to a fruit-thick finish on which you will find tempting chocolate and vanilla undertones. Long, round and generous. If this one does not make you fall in love you're a hard hearted wine lover indeed. One of the best wines ever from Israel. Approachable now but best 2011-2016. Score 95