



A Spanish Lullaby

February 16, 2016

Yossie's Wine Recommendations

a weekly newsletter on Israeli and kosher wine, wineries and other oenophilic goodies

With *Rosh Chodesh Adar Alef* already in the rear-view mirror, we can all take solace in the fact that winter will be over soon and we will be enjoying the wine-laden *chagim* of *Purim* and *Pesach* sooner than we realize! Before getting into this week's topics of Spain's incredible ElviWines, two quick public service announcements.

In preparation for the largest wine buying season of the year, the coming months will be loaded with numerous wine tasting opportunities, many of which are worth your time, effort and hard-earned *shekels*. The biggest of them all are the five **KFWE events** (Kosher Food and Wine Experience), held by Royal Wine Corporation, the largest importer of kosher wines into the US. The first of these events was KFWE Miami, held last December. KFWE London is the next event, which will be at London's Sheraton Park Lane Hotel on Tuesday February 16th. KFWE NY is the next in line, thankfully returning to Chelsea Piers' Pier 60 on Monday February 29th (readers can use **CORKBOARD18** for \$18 off the ticket price). KFWE NY is closely followed by the always fun **KFWE LA**, held this year on Wednesday, March 2nd at the awesome **Petersen Automotive Museum** located in Los Angeles (coupon code MUSINGS gets you 15% off). There are two "mini-KFWE" tastings as well, one in Paris and the other in Israel, but these tend to be smaller and invitation-only events. Following the smorgasbord of Royal events are two other major tastings, which provide the opportunity to taste the many fine offerings from wineries and producers not associated with Royal (or Herzog). The first of these is the annual tasting held by Grapevine Wines & Spirits, this year on March 6th. Last but certainly not least is the Jewish Week's Annual Grand Tasting Manhattan' City Winery, this year held on March 28th. All is all, plenty of great wine events and, as always, I hope to see as many of you as possible at one or more of them!

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I also wanted to let you know about Leket Israel's upcoming annual BBQ Soirée coming next month on March 7th. As you all know, in addition to being Israel largest food rescue organization and official food bank, it is a charity that I hold exceptionally dear to my heart, having been closely involved since its inception, nearly 15 years ago. Recognizing that it is a Monday night, the dinner is intended to be a fun affair and I very much appreciate any support you can provide (you can help out even if you choose not to attend). Tickets, sponsorships and donations can all be done on the [dinner's website](#) and I (together with Leket) thank you in advance. Now on to viva la Vino!

Part III of my Annual Trifecta (2016's Crystal Ball) will come next week but this week we are talking about ElviWines and part my recent visit to Barcelona (the first half of the trip whose Israel portion was covered in newsletter [#308](#); and the rest of my Barcelona trip, including the 20-year vertical tasting of Capcanes I was honored to attend, will come shortly thereafter). With this newsletter I am finally dealing with a serious lacuna in my wine coverage. After nearly a decade of tasting and enjoying the lovely wines made by Dr. Moises Cohen under the various Elvi labels (and enjoying his delightful company on many occasions), I finally made it to the source and was privileged to spend [far too short a] time with Moises and his wife Anna, tasting through many of their wines (including the 2013 Clos Mesorah that landed on this year's "[Best Of](#)" list) and seeing for myself how special and unique Spain's wine-growing regions are. With this being my first in-depth newsletter about Elvi, please bear with me for a little background information first.

ElviWines is a family-owned and operated business, helmed by the husband and wife duo of Dr. Moises and Anna Cohen. Originally from Casablanca, Moises left home to make *Aliyah* at the tender age of 17. In 1979 he was admitted to Israel's prestigious Institute of Technology (the Technion) where he graduated with a doctorate in Agricultural Engineering. His post-doctoral work took to him Spain's Priorat region, where he was part of an extensive study focused on utilizing technological advances for more efficient agricultural water management, which ended up focused on vineyards and viticulture. As an extra (or rather, primary) bonus, during this time he met the woman who was to become his wife and business partner – Anna, an art major and certified sommelier, originally from Toulouse. During his years of research, Moises patented certain vineyard monitoring technology which was the cornerstone of his first successful business – that of a high-end and valued consultant to vineyards and wineries. Among the most valuable “perks” of his day job as a consultant was establishing himself as a valued advisor to

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many of the region's top wineries. During a decade of providing consulting services Moises was able to establish the relationships that were the basis for his second successful business (and the reason for which we have gathered here today). The wineries with which he worked included Osborne, Marques de Grinon and Mas Martinet whose owner/winemakers included many of the folks behind the Priorat's rise to glory. Among these were Carlos Pasterna and José Luiz Pérez (of Mas Martinet and who ultimately became one of his business partners) and René Barbier. These folks, along with a handful of others were the first to recognize the potential lying in Priorat's gnarly vineyards and those responsible for its rise to prominence as a world-class wine growing region. As an aside, the Priorat region (together with others) was one of those which showcased the ability to take old-vine Carignan and turn it into something special – a lesson learned fast and well by the burgeoning Israeli wine industry. Despite having a respected history of grape growing dating back to the days of the Roman Empire, it wasn't until the 1940s that wine production took off in Spain; driven to a large degree by the establishment of many wine-growing cooperatives who bonded together to increase their negotiating leverage when dealing with the large grape buyers who were continuously squeezing their margins. While today Priorat is a highly-acclaimed wine-growing region, turning out high-end and expensive wines that garner awards left and right, back in those days it was one Spain's poorest regions; whose young adults fled at the earliest opportunity. While not without a silver lining (e.g. ultra-cheap vineyards, of which the Cohen family were happy to capitalize on), it was hard to envision it ever transforming into the base of operations for such a booming industry (just another clear indicator of Moises' terrific vision).

The establishment of a Jewish-owned prestigious wine business in Spain has significant meaning to many, given the renewed Jewish involvement with the country after so many years of exile. Following the abolition of the Inquisition in 1834 and the creation of a new constitutional monarchy that allowed for the practice of faiths other than Catholicism in 1868, Jews were finally permitted to return to Spain after living in exile for hundreds of years. However it wasn't until the formal repeal of the Alhambra Decree of 1492 in 1968 that Jewish life could once again start to flourish in Spain (between 1868 until 1968, Jews were allowed to live in Spain as individuals, but not to practice Judaism as a community) and in 1978 Spanish Jews were once again granted the right to full Spanish citizenship (a right expanded in 2014 to include any Jew of Spanish descent who could comply with certain requirements; ironically making Spain the only country besides Israel granting automatic citizenship to Jews). As things slowly improved for the Jews of Spain they were afforded additional rights, including the right to once again become Spanish landowners. According to Moises, when he

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and Anna acquired the beautiful piece of land in Catalonia's Montsant region (5 seconds away from Priorat) which holds their home, vineyards and the newly built Clos Mesorah winery, they became one of the first Sephardic Jews to own land since the Inquisition.

Founded in 2003, Elvi Wines derives its name from a combination of the Hebrew word for God ("El") and the Catalan word for wine ("Vi"). The guiding philosophy behind the establishment of ElviWines was to create world-class kosher wines (production has been 100% kosher since inception), which would showcase Spain's top wine-growing regions. Elvi's philosophy of adhering to Spain's different regions and allowing each region's terroir speak for itself is evident in their logo – that of a boat traveling across Spain's various regions to bring the best Spain has to offer to the educated wine aficionado (kosher and non-kosher alike). As with many other wineries today, the intent is to create great wines that happen to be kosher, as opposed to making kosher wine (the majority of wines are organic to boot). Despite making top tier wines for more than a decade and having great distribution throughout the continental United States, Elvi remains one of those brands whose market penetration ranks far beneath the quality of the wines. While some of this can be attributed to label confusion (Elvi has used many different labels over the years including Mati, Vina Encina, Ness, 770 and others) which Moises has recently taken steps to amend by consolidating and reorganizing his labels; another reason is the difficulty in creating proper branding for Elvi since it isn't a winery, but rather a wine producing business (or partial ownership in six different wineries).

As with most European wine-growing countries, Spain takes its viticulture classification very seriously. Known as *Denominaciones de Origen* ("DOC") and similar to France's Appellation d'origine Contrôlée, in order for wines to be labeled as coming from the prestigious region from which they are sourced (e.g. Rioja) they need to be crushed, produced and bottled in the same region. This requirement precludes Elvi from maintaining a central winery and producing all of its different wines (see list below) in the same location. While it would obviously be easier to have a single production facility (and cohesive label) to produce the approximately 100,000 annual bottles made by Elvi, Moises' desire to properly showcase the various prestigious wine growing regions of his adopted homeland requires him to maintain six (!) different wineries spread across Spain (along with a myriad of different labels tied together by nothing more than the "ElviWines" moniker (not even a coherent winemaking style is appropriate given the disparate terroir and winemaking philosophies showcased by the different regions). In addition to fierce pride in Spain's wine growing abilities, Moises' decision carries with it a commercial rationale as well – while most United States Elvi consumers are kosher adhering wine lovers

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who are not as concerned with strict adherence to classification rules, the majority of Elvi wine is sold throughout Spain and the rest of the European Union where proper labeling is of utmost importance and proper classification is zealously guarded (including in the numerous Michelin-starred restaurants throughout Spain which serve his various wines).

Recognizing the economic value in branding, Elvi recently reorganized its wines into four different levels spread across the following wine-growing regions: Priorat, Rioja (both DOCa (or DOQ in Catalan) - Spain's second-highest DOC after *Vino de Pago*), Ribera del Jucar (in the Castilla-La Mancha DO), **Alto Turia** (in the Valencia DO), Alella DO, Monsant DO and the "multi-regional" Cava. The four levels include Elvi's flagship wines (Clos Mesorah and EL 26), the "reserve" line of Adar, the multi-labeled Rioja line made in partnership with the acclaimed Bodega Castillo de Sajazarra (a Reserva, a Crianza, an unofficial level of semi-Crianza (six months in oak) and a Rioja – each sourced from a different single vineyard). Additionally there is the entry-level wines in the Vina Encina series (comprised of three wines, two of which I tasted along with a Blanco), the ever popular (and oft-recommended by me), non-vintage Cava (a perennial YH Best Buy) and the delightfully crisp, complex and delectably ageable InVita (Latin for the Jewish "*LeChaim*" blessing), a blend which includes the ancient Pansa Blanca grape (a primary varietal in Cava which disappeared during Roman times only to be revitalized in its indigenous Spain).

In each region in which Elvi produces wines, the business model dictates partnering with an existing (and typically high end) winery, to make certain of their wines for Elvi. In most cases, the Cohens start with a relatively small percentage of kosher production until "proof of concept" is established" and they can convince the winery that the economics make sense, after which they slowly up the ante towards the goal of achieving 100% kosher production. The exception to this is Elvi's flagship Clos Mesorah wine which is produced on and sourced from the Cohens personal property located in Montsant, a hair's breath away from Priorat.

Upon my arrival, and despite having an exceptionally limited amount of time for my visit (completely my own fault), Moises insisted on going for a quick tour of the vineyards. After a remarkably picturesque drive through the windswept scenery, we arrived at one of the villages where we switched cars for a heart-stopping near vertical climb up on of the village mountains where ancient Carignan was planted in every nook and cranny. Forget the meticulously-trimmed and ramrod straight vineyards of Napa and Bordeaux – these vineyards are rugged and wild, helping grant Priorat reputation its wine have garnered over the years. After returning to

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the winery (and allowing the sheer terror of the vertical tour to subside), Moises, Anna and I managed to taste through a great selection of their wines including verticals of the two flagship wines – EL26 and Clos Mesorah (including a barrel sample of the 2015 Clos Mesorah). Following the tasting and surrounded by ancient vines and fruit trees with the Montsant and rugged Priorat landscape providing a breathtaking backdrop, I was privileged to enjoy Anna's delightful cooking which included some of the most delicious salmon, [tortilla de patatas](#), home cured olives and fresh cheeses which, combined with the Cohen's delicious company and the general ambiance, provided me with one of the most memorable wine-related experiences of recent memory – thank you Moises and Anna.

Below are tasting notes from the wines I tasted and enjoyed during my visit (with this being the first time writing the winery's "story", I added notes from a few additional Elvi wines I tasted in the last two months). I hope you enjoy them as much as I did and look forward to hearing what you think.

Have a great week,

Yossie

ElviWines, Adar, Cava, Brut, N.V.: A longtime favorite of mine and a great option when you are looking for a good sparkling wine for under \$20 (especially when you need a *mevushal* option). Crisply dry with plenty of acidity and a tight mousse, the wine is a blend of Spanish grapes including Pansa Blanca (a/k/a Xarello) with plenty of bright red fruit, lemon pith and grapefruit on a light to medium bodied palate with yeasty brioche, tart green apple and plenty of lip-smacking citrus. Any easy drinking, great with anything, refreshing sparkling wine. Cava as it was meant to be. With the newer bottling being *mevushal*, it is easier to ensure you are skipping the older (non-*mevushal*) versions which are getting a little old and tired). Well worth stocking up on and having on hand for anytime the fancy strikes.

ElviWines, Vina Encina, Rosado (Rosé), 2014: I don't believe this wine was imported to the US but it did make its way to Israel where this well-priced and simple Rosé found quite the following, selling out very quickly. With the majority of their wines providing high QPR, it sounds repetitive to keep mentioning Elvi's value for money but this entry-level series certainly hits pay dirt along all three of its wines. The Vina Encina is made in the same facility as his Adar reviewed below. This Rosé is made from 100% Tempranillo and produced in the *Saignée* method (utilizing the same fruit that went into the Tinto wine reviewed below), the wine is quite

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lovely with plenty of bracing acid keep the wine fresh and lively while providing a wide array of bright red summer fruit, plenty of citrus including clementines, red grapefruit and tart limes wrapped around a mineral-laden core with a hint of pleasing bitterness providing just enough complexity to keep things interesting for those unsatisfied with having an uncomplicated joyous drinking experience.

ElviWines, Vina Encina, Tinto, 2014: As with the Rosé, this *mevushal* wine is comprised of 100% Tempranillo from La Mancha vineyards located at 700 meters above sea level. With a bright and fresh nose loaded with red tart fruits, freshly turned forest floor, savory tannins and a medium bodied palate with more red fruit, backed up by a mineral backbone that provides more complexity than one would expect in a “simple” wine, Moises once again succeeds in providing a great entry-level wine for everyday drinking (13% AbV) that proudly reflects the terroir from which it is sourced.

ElviWines, InVita, 2014: A terrific blend of Pansa Blanca (60%) and Sauvignon Blanc (40%) sourced from *La Roca del Vallés* located in the Alella DO. While I have had a soft spot for this wine since its first release in 2009 given its crisp complexity, refreshing citrus notes and bracing acid, at my recent visit with Moises we tasted it side by side with the 2010 vintage which provide some real insight to what the grape (and wine) can do with a little extra time in the bottle. While \$15 wines don't typically get put away for aging, I'd urge you to make an exception for a few bottles of this wine as the time will enable it to evolve into a richer and more viscous wine with plenty of oomph. The 2015 was just released, is not yet in the US and I have not tasted but the 2014 is bright and fresh with an aromatic nose bursting with zesty citrus, green apple, hints of ripe and tart raspberries long with plenty of floral notes, a hint of the viscosity the wine will develop over time and with a core of acidity that keeps the wine dancing on your palate and making it more than a match for a delightfully wide array of foods. Medium bodied with plenty of the racy fruit accompanied by saline minerals, more green apple and robust citrus, this is another of those white wines that will make a convert out of any remaining “only red wine” drinkers. Even without the bargain price tag that grants it the **YH Best Buy** label, this is a wine that is well worth seeking out and enjoying over the next 1-3 years

ElviWines, InVita, 2013: With even more of the indigenous Pansa Blanc (70%) comprising the blend, the 2013 has more restrained fruit notes which allow for added layers of mineral-laden complexity to shine through. That said, the lovely nose is redolent with plenty of straw, petrol, slate minerals and an array of near-sweet rich fruits including tart green apple, grapefruit, lemon,

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limes, Anjou pears, apricot with a subtle overlay of warm herbs. Medium bodied with great acid, this is a wine that was so tempting on release it was hard to imagine putting any away, but those patient enough to do so will be rewarded these days as the wine has attained a richer veneer of maturity with the fruit really taking second stage to the medley of straw, slate, minerals and citrus nose with the acid intact and continuing to provide proper “cover”. As with many things, that extra year of aging has the wine well on its way from good to magnificent (attained with the 2010 vintage reviewed below)! An enviable success of what a Mediterranean white wine can (or should be) – well balanced between crisply refreshing acidity and near-sweet and refreshing fruit with enough complexity to keep the more discerning oenophile (or snob) engaged.

ElviWines, InVita, 2011: With the blend squarely in between the 2013 and 2014 vintages (65% Pansa Blanca), the 2011 was an immediate Horwitz household hit, providing great balance between complexity, crisp acidity and a n approachability for anyone who desired it. With plenty of citrus and refreshing acidity from the Sauvignon Blanc providing a refreshing and contrasting crispness to the heavier tropical notes provided by the Pansa Blanca. With pleasing mineral overtones and a subdued nose reminiscent of the once vibrant notes of tropical fruit, pear lemon, pineapple, red grapefruit and zesty citrus notes, this is a rich and clean wine that refreshes and delights. A medium to full bodied palate has plenty more tropical fruit and citrus, accompanied by ripe pear, herbaceousness, tart apple and a pleasing dose of minerals on a round and mouth-filling palate which has attained a higher level of complexity as it spent the last 3 years in the depths of my cellar.

ElviWines, InVita, 2010: Between human desire for instant gratification and the general mantra that white wines should be consumed within 1-2 years of harvest, it is no wonder that this was my first opportunity to taste the InVita more than five years following its release but what an opportunity it was. With rich tropical fruits, citrus, tart green apple and sun-dried straw matched nicely with hints of petrol, dried figs and roasted herbal notes along with a pleasing bitterness all being held together by still crisp acidity evident in the background, the wine needs some time to air itself out and flex its slumbering muscles but it is worth the wait. With a depth of character that would have been tough to anticipate based on its charming approachability upon release. A real pleasure – thank you Moises for sharing!

Elvi, Herenza, Rioja, 2013: Rioja wines are rated by the amount of aging they undergo – a combination of time between the barrel and the bottle. A Crianza requires an hour in the barrel

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and one in the bottle, so Moises coined this one a Semi-Crianza (although this unofficial moniker appears nowhere on the label), representing the six months of oak aging under its belt. Medium bodied and approachable out of the bottle, the wine is loaded with ripe and mostly red fruit including wild cherries and tart raspberries wrapped in a cocoon of earthy minerals, sweet herbal notes around a good acidic core, the wine is friendly and welcoming with soft tannins and no pretensions. With hints of espresso, black licorice and freshly cured tobacco leaf from the six months in oak and some savory notes of freshly grilled meat, the wine is an easy YH Best Buy and a welcome addition to Elvi's terrifically curated portfolio.

Elvi, Mati, Rioja, 2009: Prior to "Herenza" the line was known as "Mati" but it is the same wine. A lovely near-sweet red nose with hints of minerals, anise and a tinge of blueberries is matched with roasted espresso and slightly toasty oak. The medium bodied palate has plenty of earthy minerals and tart red fruit with mouth-coating tannins and great acid backing it up and making this a pleasurable wine for nearly almost any occasion (with a price to allow such repeated enjoyment). Drink now.

Elvi, Herenza, Rioja, Crianza, 2010: As with all of Elvi's Rioja wines (and despite being allowed to use other varietals including Grenache), the wine is 100% Tempranillo sourced from a single vineyard which spent a year in oak before lying in Elvi's cellar for another year prior to release. The nose has plenty of tart raspberries and fragrant strawberries along with loads of saline minerals, earth and floral notes. The medium bodied palate has nice red fruit along with earthy minerals, bitter herbs and plenty of chocolate, anise and warm spices providing a delicious experience and a great price, earning this wine a YH Best Buy. As it evolves, look for savory notes of saddle leather and roasted meat alongside an array of Mediterranean herbs and hints of freshly roasted espresso bean and freshly-rolled cigars with a hint of slightly smoky oak. Drink now through 2017.

Elvi, Herenza, Rioja, Reserva, 2010: Following on the well-deserved success of their inaugural Rioja Reserva, the 2010 vintage doesn't disappoint (not surprising given that the excellent 2010 vintage was a better year one Rioja than the really good 2009). With a delightful nose of ripe and mostly red rich and slightly tart fruits combined with plenty of earthy minerals, loamy earth, chocolate, slightly toasty oak, anise and a hint of blueberries continuing onto a full bodied and extremely savory palate of rich fruit in perfect balance with the savory notes of grilled meat, rich earth that is exceptionally delicious; this is another Elvi wine for the ages and one that deserves to share the flagship perch with the Clos Mesorah. Approachable now, the wine should cellar

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and continue to develop through 2020, likely longer.

Elvi, Herenza, Rioja, Reserva, 2009: The technical difference between a Tempranillo Crianza Rioja and a Reserva is merely one additional year of aging (from two to three) with at least two of them in oak (as opposed to one for the Crianza) but after comparing Elvi's Herenza Rioja in its two formats, there is a lot more going on that simply one more year prior to release. While the other Rioja wines on the market (the ever-present Ramon Cardova and the Elvi, among others) are simple and every day drinking wines (with the Elvi far superior than the Ramon Cardova), the inaugural (and I believe only kosher) Reserva is a wine to be contended with. Rich and extracted and loaded with rich and mostly red forest fruit with hints of black cherries and plums added to the mix in addition to notes of sweet wood, anise, graphite and very earthy minerals. While the bold tannic structure has softened somewhat, the wine still needs at least 45 minutes of air before its charms can be fully appreciated (which bodes well for its future) and should cellar beautifully through 2020.

Elvi, Adar, 2008: A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (37%), Petit Verdot (35%) and Syrah (28%), all from the Ribera del Júcar DO located within the broader La Mancha region which spent 12 months aging in a combination of French and American oak. A rich nose of mostly black fruit including loads of ripe plums tinged with tart raspberries and a hint of blueberries with plenty of warm spices, rich baker's chocolate, mocha, vanilla and lead pencil, savory tannins and fresh-cracked black peppercorns. Medium bodied but bright and alive with great acidity and nicely integrated tannins (despite its 8 years of age) with plenty of near sweet fruit kept in check by vibrant acidity and a depth of complexity that tantalizes. A lovely wine with 13.5% AbV.

Elvi, EL 26, 2008: The youngest and most brutish of the EL26 wines I have tasted. When sipping this wine you can almost see the rugged hills of Priorat covered in their gnarled and ancient vines and feel the wine rushing by. The 2008 once again added Carignan to the blend which also included the typical Syrah, Grenache and Merlot. With a rich and expressive nose loaded with ripe blackberries, cassis and plums accompanied by hints of sweet red fruits, rich tannins, fresh-turned earthy, graphite, tar, anise, tobacco leaf and roasted coffee beans, the nose needed some time before calming down and sharing all it had to offer. The muscular and full bodied palate was backed by searing tannins, plenty of rich fruit and layers of oriental spices, rich minerals, savory notes of roasted meat and more cured tobacco leaf, which all leads into a long and highly extracted finish loaded with more spicy oak, dark chocolate, anise and a lingering note of slightly bitter herbs. Give this wine at least another 12 months before enjoying

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through 2021.

Elvi, EL 26, 2006: Tasted on its own, the 2006 is a beast of a wine, presenting as a highly extracted and controlled representation of the rugged terroir that is Priorat. However, when tasted alongside the 2004 and 2005 vintages, it stands out as the most restrained of the three wines. The 2006 was a slightly different blend of Grenache (35%), Syrah (35%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (30%) which was also aged in 4000 liter oak tanks for approximately 20 months while showcasing decent balance and powerful structure (production was halved for the 2006 vintage compared with the 2005). A concentrated and extracted nose is loaded with rich black and red fruits, combined with toasty oak, loamy earth, dark spices, anise, slightly bitter herbal notes and a hint of violets. The full bodied and highly concentrated palate is loaded with near-sweet and mostly rich red and slightly tangy red fruits, still gripping tannins, saddle leather, more toasty oak, bramble and a lingering finish. Drink now through 2018.

Elvi, EL 26, 2005: Probably my favorite vintage for the EL26, Using all five of the permitted Priorat grapes (Cabernet Sauvignon (20%), Merlot (10%), Syrah (40%), Grenache (30%) and Carignan, with only 35% are the typical Priorat grapes of Grenache and Carignan), the wine was aged in 4000 liter oak tanks for 20 months and was a slightly more manageable 14.5&AbV. A rich and dense nose is loaded with ripe blackberries, black plums, hints of sweet cherry and notes of raspberries alongside lavender, black pepper, toasty oak, tobacco leaf, dark chocolate and earthy minerals. The full bodied and massive palate is well balanced between the rich fruits, toasty oak, spicy notes and still robust tannins that continue to provide the great structure enabling this wine to continue to please ten years following its release. Even now, while eminently drinkable, the wine will benefit from an hour of decanting. Drink now through 2018.

Elvi, EL 26, 2004: Originally labeled at “770” (the label we tasted), the wine was also known simply as “Elvi Priorat” before the Cohens settled on the EL26 (representing G-ds name in Hebrew and *gematria*), 2004 was the inaugural vintage of Elvi’s “first” flagship wine which represented the taming of the big, bold, beast that was Priorat. The wine is a blend of Syrah (40%), Grenache (30%), Cabernet Sauvignon (%20) and Merlot (10%) that aged for 18 months in 4,000 liter French oak casks (the same blend was used for the 2005 vintage before the Merlot was dropped in the 2006 vintage) which clocked in at 15.5% AbV. At this point presenting an aromatic nose of near-sweet and mostly red fruits with a hint of crushed black forest berries added to the mix, along with plenty of roasted herbs, leather and graphite leading to a full bodied palate with the fruit still showing nicely along with baker’s chocolate, spicy oak and well

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integrated and silky tannins combined with decent acid provide sufficient backbone for this wine to showcase its beauty of yesteryear while remaining a delicious treat but one whose time has come. Drink any remaining bottles over the next 12 months or so.

Elvi, Clos Mesorah, 2013: Officially sharing the “flagship” moniker with the winery’s El26, this is the Cohen’s finest production yet (with last year’s “most Interesting” Herenza Reserva” remaining the most intriguing of them all). A blend of 50% old-vine Carignan and 30% Grenache along with 20% Syrah, the wine opens with gobs of rich [but tempered] mostly red fruit including raspberries, red cherries, tinted with a hint of boysenberry and slate alongside cassis and subtle blueberry, accompanied by a delightfully earthy minerals, rich dark chocolate, spicy oak, fresh-rolled cigars, notes of oaky vanilla and roasted espresso on a full bodied palate where fresh-turned earth, hints of lavender and grilled meat are added to the mix before culminating in a rich and caressing finish that lingers on and on. With near-searing tannins providing a well-structured backbone that will help the wine age beautifully over the next decade, this is one for the ages and reminiscent of Elvi’s inaugural and almost-obscenely great 2009 vintage. A beautifully elegant wine with a lingering and expressive finish to match, do not let this one pass you by. Despite being the current release, the wine is so far from being approachable at this point that it needs eight-to-ten hours of decanting. Give it the time and respect it deserves and stash it away in the far recesses of your cellar, making a note to yourself to check in again with this wine in two years when it might begin to be approachable. It should cellar well through 2025, likely longer.

ElviWines, Clos Mesorah, 2010: Despite being only a year older than the 2009 reviewed below, the 2010 vintage presents significantly more closed and required substantial time in the glass before it opened to reveal its many layers of charms. A beautiful wine with plenty of power backstopping a breathtaking elegance, it is a blend of old Carignan (40%), Grenache (30%) and Syrah (30%) which spent 18 months in new French oak. With a bountiful nose loaded with ripe blackberries, rich cassis, raspberries, near-sweet cherries, Mediterranean herbs, green olives, floral notes and earthy minerals, the wine continued to unwrap itself over the 45 minutes I spent observing it in the glass (time well spent – I promise). The plush and full bodied palate has a core of gripping tannins surrounded by much of the same notes which are joined by tantalizing hints of graphite, freshly turned forest floor, tart red fruit and a faint hint of bittersweet dark chocolate. With a finish that lingers seemingly forever, this is truly a magnificent wine that should be savored. Highly enjoyable now (although it certainly benefits from 30-45 minutes of air), the wine should continue to develop and cellar through 2021.

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ElviWines, Clos Mesorah, 2009: The inaugural vintage of this tremendous wine, providing a “sister” flagship wine to the El 26 which sits at the top of Elvi’s totem pole. With a far more subtle and elegant style than the bombastic EL 26, this wine is a powerhouse in its own right and one that needs 2-4 years of bottle aging following release before it begins to show what it’s capable of. A limited production of 3000 bottles was made of this blend of 90 year old Carignan (40%), Grenache (30%) and Syrah (30%) which spent 18 months in new French oak. An abundantly aromatic nose of blackberries, cherries, plum and lavender is accompanied by hints of blueberries, violets, plenty of spiciness and a slight creaminess from the oak with an added patina of well-worn saddle leather, earthy minerals and graphite which are more recent additions to the complex array of notes served up by this delicious wine. Much of the same on the palate with rich and gripping but now well-integrated tannins and smoked meat joining the layered notes of fruit, wood and oak that provide an elegant backdrop. A long finish with more spicy oak, dark rich chocolate and black fruit reminds you that it’s time to refill your glass. The wine is at peak now and should continue to cellar comfortably through 2018, maybe longer.