

The Icon

A staple on Passover tables, Manischewitz is made nearby—in Naples, NY

BY CARLIE FISHGOLD

In 1947, the Monarch Wine Company in Brooklyn wanted to produce an affordable kosher wine for the waves of Jewish immigrants settling in New York City, peaking in the millions by the 1950s. The company tapped the Manischewitz Company based in Ohio, brokering a licensing deal and making the product immediately trustworthy to those looking for a reliable and familiar kosher label. Today, Manischewitz is a part of the Constellation Brands portfolio and still uses grapes grown in Naples, NY.

Manischewitz went mainstream in 1960, when Sammy Davis Jr., a Jewish convert, premiered as a spokesperson for the “Man, Oh Manischewitz” commercial. Davis lost the contract after it was revealed that he had a foursome at the Playboy Mansion. Mazel tov!

A given at the Passover seder—a springtime meal that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday season—four cups of kosher wine are ceremoniously consumed throughout the meal.

Known for its super-sweet taste, pure cane sugar is used for making the “kosher for Passover” Manischewitz wines, which are available up to four months before Passover begins.

Manischewitz wines maintain the kosher certification of “Mevushal,” which means they can be open and served by non-Jewish hands without sacrificing kosher observance.

The wine is “cooked,” or boiled, drastically altering the tannins by killing off the grapes’ integral mold. This was once done to deter idol worshippers from opening the wine and offering it to a god or ancestor.

Concord grapes (a *vitis labrusca* grape species native to eastern North America) from Upstate New York were chosen as the juice grapes of choice because of their shipping proximity to New York City.

