



# Cremisan Wine Estate

By Bassam Almohor



Drink wine! 'tis life etern, and travail's meed,  
Fruitage of youth and balm of age's need:  
'Tis the glad time of roses, wine, and friends;  
Rejoice thy spirit—that is life indeed.

*Omar Khayyam*

**O**n the southern border of Jerusalem, five kilometers west of Bethlehem, and on an area of 700 dunums (173 acres), terraces, vineyards, olive groves, and a wide area of pine woods surround Cremisan Monastery and Winery. This vast, open, terraced expanse – a lush, fertile, green horticultural gem, 800 meters above sea level, direction north, where rain is abundant – has long been well taken care of. In the mid-nineteenth century, Cremisan Monastery was founded by an Italian priest, and a few years later, the winery was established to sustain the monastery and the convent run by the Salesians of Don Bosco. (Location: 31.730392, 35.171292)



Cremisan Wine Estate has made the most delicious and tasty wines since 1885. The first fruits produced wines for mass, and later, production expanded to a wide variety of wines and other spirits. Fadi Batarseh, director and winemaker at Cremisan, explains the process of winemaking. To make white wine, white grapes go to a crusher/de-stemmer after harvesting and then to the press where grape juice is stored in stainless steel tanks for fermentation. Red grapes, after being harvested, are taken to a crusher/de-stemmer and then stored in tanks for fermentation. Once fermented, the wine is taken to the press and to wine tanks. What makes the color red is the skin, hence fermentation comes before press. To give it a distinctive aroma, red wine is stored later in oak barrels whereas white wine is stored in stainless steel tanks.

Cremisan Wine Estate is a travel destination. Mr. Batarseh takes his visitors on a historical tour of the place, explaining all stages, secrets, and tricks of winemaking. Visitors are then rewarded with tasting wine and other spirits. At the entrance to the winery is a showroom where guests can purchase wine and other spirits.



In 2008, Cremisan began to expand its sales to the local market, even exporting to North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Production includes three types of local wine named after local grapes: Baladi, Dabuki, and Hamdani/Jandali, in addition to the international Cabernet Sauvignon, Reserve, Star of Bethlehem, Messa, and Port Wine. Cherry liquor, coffee liquor, limoncello, lemon cream liquor, 35-year-old brandy, and arak (53% alcohol) are also produced. You can find extra virgin olive oil, vinegar, and grape juice as well.

Cremisan Wine Estate is not only a monastery and winery. Last year, an open-air space enclosed by cypress trees and floored with green grass was opened as a wedding venue. Wine festivals are organized twice a year: the summer festival in June and the Christmas festival in December.

Cremisan Monastery and Winery also has a playground, and visitors can enjoy a vast forest area where wildlife can still be found. The winery is open Monday through Friday, 7:00–15:45; Saturday 7:00–12:00; closed Sunday. For organized tours and wine tasting, please call Fadi Batarseh at 02 274 4825, 050 928 3330, or email: [fadi.cremisan@gmail.com](mailto:fadi.cremisan@gmail.com), Facebook: [@CremisanWineEstate1885](https://www.facebook.com/CremisanWineEstate1885).

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