



❖ New Lebanon is Fermenting ❖

So much has happened since our last issue: the harvest, the demonstrations in Lebanon, the opening of Massaya Faqra for the winter season, our new distribution in Lebanon, the financial crisis, and the new website!

A challenging year for Lebanon, a challenging harvest for us

Honestly speaking, the 2019 harvest reminded us of 2004's, when we fired the winemaker in the midst of it and Ramzi ended up doing the wines for the first time using a golden hotline (daily phone calls) with Daniel and Frederic Brunier who were steering the fermentations remotely. These days, we've much more experience under our belts, but nonetheless our 2019 harvest tested us – largely for two reasons: one technical and one human.

The technical reason was the quantity of water in the undersoil. Winter 2019 was a record year in terms of rainfall and the water accumulated in the undersoil delayed the ripening of the grapes by two to three weeks. On the human side, the October 17 uprising in Lebanon played its hand, as the tension it generated became the prevailing ambiance and we, caught in its throes, hastened our harvest a little bit. It is true what they say: wines translate the mindset of the vintners. So, while our Rosé 2019 will be released as planned in mid February and our other staples - Le Colombier, Terrasses de Baalbeck, the Massaya Blanc and our Massaya arak - will join it, we might not release

the Cap Est and Awala (a Blanc from the grapes of Massaya Faqra and sold exclusively on our premises) this year.



Wherever you are in Lebanon, Massaya will be

Massaya has assigned Ets. Wassef Cheiban (EWC) as its new distributor in Lebanon. EWC is specialized in spirits distribution since 1997 and has the largest fleet and distribution capabilities in the country.

EWC is a one-stop-shop distributing all major brands in Lebanon whether local or imported. Thus our move to work with EWC is strategic for both partners and Massaya is excited to have Ets. Wassef Cheiban championing our products across all channels and segments.

We are confident that Massaya Wine and Arak lovers will acclaim this new alliance!

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A winery in the midst of a revolution – a few headlights explained

Lebanon's economic model was unsustainable. The business model that prevailed since the 1950s in Lebanon was obsolete and declining. Since the '50s Lebanon had relied on easy money transfers from the Gulf region because of the oil benefits. This reliance was direct in the case of loans, deposits, investments, and subsidies that the Gulf states and citizens granted Lebanon, and it was indirect in the case of Gulf tourism, the remittances of Lebanese who worked in the Gulf region, or Lebanese investments in the Gulf countries. As the Gulf states started rationalizing their finances, Lebanon could no longer benefit from their overflow of cash.

Practically, the tax system in Lebanon privileged the banking sector, real estate, high-end tourism, and importers, while other sectors, such as services (ad agencies, media, medication, education, etc.), budget tourism, industry, agriculture, and local production and creativity in general were underprivileged. To sum it up, Lebanon imported goods worth 20 billion USD while it exported goods worth around 3 billion USD. That was fine as long as the cash kept flowing in from the Gulf states, Africa, and Europe. This income covered the outgoing expenses, but since the Syrian crisis (2011) the surplus in the balance of payment has been melting like Mount Lebanon snow beneath the sun in a clear Mediterranean sky.

Instead of acknowledging the end of an era and enhancing the productive economy, restructuring the administration, recalibrating taxation, and adapting customs policy, Lebanon's politicians engineered tactics to lure cash into the country: very high interest rates. So Lebanon ended up with huge deficits and disproportionate debt servicing, which is totally out of step with the productive economy. Now, as a result, depositors are trapped because the banks are restricting transfers abroad and money withdrawals.

How long might this situation last? The longer we wait to seriously tackle the restructuring of the economy the longer the crisis will be. It seems odd, but Lebanon's fundamentals are still very positive. The state is still rich in assets (companies, real estate, foreign and diaspora support), and the productive economy will rapidly rebound thanks to the human resources potential in Lebanon, our entrepreneurial spirit, and our legendary resilience. But we must get rid of the shortcuts and shortsighted solutions and start restructuring our economy. Are the

existing political parties up to the task of tackling these challenging reforms, or is a new set of politicians needed to take on the job? This is the ongoing debate between the “revolutionaries” and the establishment. As vintners, we have learned to be patient and to work hard; as Lebanese, we have learned to be super patient and to believe in our faith!



Of course all this turmoil has an impact on our daily life, but, despite the hurdles and difficulties, we opened Massaya Faqra for the winter season and revamped our menus. And believe us, we were so happy to get rid of our imported ingredients and instead focus on local producers and local items! Finally, the farm-to-table approach is valued in Lebanon. We are presently focusing on baking daily all our bread, even our hamburger buns, and we continue to make all our own sauces – including our mayonnaise, ketchup, quince compote, jams, and chutneys. We are privileged to work with local producers of mushrooms, duck, and sausages, and we have given all our sauces some local flair; we cook with local ingredients and as always we prepare our own fond de sauce, our bouillon, from scratch without any flavoring or enhancers besides spices, and we favor local spices, such as sumac, thyme, and juniper.

Our restaurant opening hours have altered slightly. The Fireplace is in action on weekends and on bank holidays, and we open the SunsetBar on weekdays. New seating at the SunsetBar offers comfort and a breathtaking view overlooking the snow, the valleys, Beirut and the Mediterranean Sea. We've also introduced fokharas, clay vessels that we use to cook healthy and yummy recipes in our wood oven. And for those who avoid gluten, we're now offering an oat-based pizza dough.

If you live in Lebanon, come and experience the Massaya spirit, and if you are abroad we recommend you plan a trip this summer to visit and enjoy the rebirth of this old and enchanting country!

[Read More](#)

✦ [Massaya.com vers 4](#) ✦



A Brand New Website

Yes, we do have a brand new website: Massaya web vers.4 developed once more by BornInteractive.

Massaya and BornInteractive have been collaborating for the last 21 years. We were just a tiny joint venture and Born's offices were in an apartment building when we started our first website. Our latest website is designed to be more social media friendly, to improve the visitor experience, to better present our various production sites, and to outline the different services we offer in terms of products (wine and arak) and in terms of hospitality. We believe that with this site we have outlined fairly the Massaya Wine Resort in Faqra and the winery, distillery, and vineyards in Tanaïl, while also showing the spirit of the people behind Massaya.

Please let us know what you think of this new version. And please register by clicking on the link below to receive this newsletter monthly; your support is very important to us.

Join Our Newsletter

✦ **Meet Fatmé** ✦



Fatmé joined Massaya in 2016. Her husband is a professional cook, and they both live in Baalbeck. Fatmé worked as a waitress when she first came to us, but it was quickly clear that her passion lay in the kitchen. Fatmé gradually worked her way up in the kitchen, and now she is our most-trusted fireplace cook. So, on weekends, Fatmé is the master of our grill, while her husband stays home to care for their son Bassam.

We are very proud to encourage and enable people through their work with us to challenge themselves and their society's expectations. Fatmé epitomizes this spirit, but we have plenty of such men and women who work with us; some of them have been part of the family for more than 20 years. We have this satisfying feeling that Massaya has changed their lives for the better!

[Learn More](#)

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

Daily winery tours and tastings, 10:00-17:00

FIREPLACE RESTAURANT

Saturday lunch and dinner

Sunday lunch à la carte

SUNSETBAR

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday lunch

Tuesday Closed

Friday Lunch and dinner

THE POND GARDEN - reopens June 2020

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