



## GIVING KITCHEN WINE

WHERE TO BUY

An exclusive, proprietary wine with an intentionally inclusive price tag.

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Story by **Ryan Plecha**

Photos courtesy of  
**Maayan Koschitzky** and  
**David Green**

**This year's Giving Kitchen Wine has just been released on wine lists and package store shelves, but what makes it so special?** The organization it supports, the story it tells and the exceptional wine in the bottle are just some of the reasons to pour a glass of the 2018 pinot noir, chardonnay or cabernet sauvignon.

Local Three chef, Unsukay partner and GK board member **Chris Hall** recalled, "**Ryan Hiding**er loved to make beer and was really good at it. Ryan was the beer guy and I was the wine guy, so we'd bounce back and forth. Eventually, I was like, 'Hey, we need to do a wine for Giving Kitchen.'"

A few years later, Giving Kitchen - Ryan's legacy - had grown. Hall, still wanting to incorporate his love of wine with GK's mission, conferred with longtime friend and colleague Tyler Young of **Eagle Rock Distributing**. Young says they got together with other GK leadership and asked themselves what they could do to help raise awareness for the organization. "The idea we came up with was to create a wine label for Giving Kitchen."

There have been a lot of contributions from distributors and purveyors of wine who donate a portion of their proceeds to GK, which Hall describes as, "incredibly generous and huge support," but none of it is truly Giving Kitchen's wine because it doesn't tell the whole story. Giving Kitchen was born of heartache but also of love and support for one person that inspired a network of support for an entire industry. Giving Kitchen and its origin story are entwined. One does not exist without the other. Any partnership or product created in support of GK thrives when implemented as a conduit for that story.

Hall says, "I think there's something incredibly authentic about us being able to say, 'Hey, this is made for us. This is the only place you can get it, and this is our proprietary wine.'" Not only does this wine raise awareness for GK, \$2 per bottle of GK Wine sold goes directly to Giving Kitchen to provide stability for food service workers in need.



Maayan Koschitzky, owner of wineries Amphorae in Israel and La Pelle in California as well as Director of Winemaking for Atelier Melka.

**As a distributor, Young has connections to high-end vintners from around the country.** “We wanted to get a credible winemaker from legit fruit sources that were sustainably farmed inside these world-class vineyards around California... We wanted to connect the winemaker and the vineyard owners with the people that sell their brands, which are our servers and our bartenders.” He knew David Green and winemaker Maayan Koschitzky through Green’s winery, Royal Prince Wines, which are distributed in Georgia through Eagle Rock. Of Koschitzky, Young says, “He’s the first guy I thought of. He’s the guy that made the most sense to me.” With Koschitzky’s winemaking prowess and Green’s track record of managing successful wine brands, it was a no-brainer.

Green has lived and worked in the Napa Valley for 20 years in a variety of positions within the wine industry. He’s worked as a general manager for a handful of wineries and was the founding President of Dana Estates winery. Dana Estates went on to produce several wines rated at 100 points by Wine Advocate and esteemed wine critic Robert Parker - two prominent names in wine scoring. Green spoke with pride when talking about Dana Estates but said he missed creating something that would serve a larger audience. “It was an incredible project, but very few people were going to be able to have access to it.”

Now Green works in his own consulting firm helping small family wineries get national recognition and distribution. It was at Dana Estates where Green first worked with Philippe Melka, another heavy-hitter in the wine world, and through Melka met Maayan Koschitzky. Green and Koschitzky worked together on other projects over the years, including at Green’s Royal Prince Wines, and are now together at the helm of Giving Kitchen Wine.

Green says, “We went in the early days to Staplehouse and were blown away by the concept but then, of course, emotionally drawn to the mission. They had us at ‘Hello.’ When Tyler Young asked if we’d be interested in being the vintner partner, there was no hesitance at all. We were all in.”

While there have been many people who deserve credit for the success of the GK Wine project, none is more responsible for the wine in the bottle than Maayan Koschitzky.

Koschitzky’s primary job is as the Director of Winemaking for Atelier Melka (owned by Philippe Melka), a world-renowned wine consulting firm based out of Napa Valley. In this role, Koschitzky consults on winemaking throughout California and parts of Washington state and internationally in Chile, Canada, Australia and in his native Israel.

Koschitzky was born in Israel to a farming family. He grew up, joined the Israeli army and served as a paratrooper. After his service, he traveled the world and spent a lot of time in Argentina where he says he first fell in love with wine in Mendoza. He returned to Israel to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering, and it was during a project about mechanisms to sort grapes that he fell in love with winemaking and decided to change careers. “I never looked back.” In addition to his work at Atelier Melka, Koschitzky also owns a winery in Israel called Amphorae and a winery in California called La Pelle. He continues to collect global accolades, including being named one of Wine Enthusiast’s 40 Under 40 Tastemakers in 2019.

## GK Wine — Giving Kitchen

Green says it best when describing Koschitzky as “the most humble person.” With his skill, experience and natural talent, Koschitzky’s services are coveted. Fortunately for GK, it’s important to him to use his powers for good and to lend his time and talent to organizations like Giving Kitchen. He and Green have leveraged their relationships in California wine country - namely Napa and Sonoma - to source fantastic fruit from exclusive parcels of land at prices that simply aren’t available to other people. As Hall says, working with Koschitzky is “like having LeBron play for your team at a discount.”



David Green, principal and owner of David Green & Co and owner of Royal Prince Wines.

**Both Koschitzky and Green understand that food service workers are underserved and do not have financial safety nets in the ways workers in other industries do.** They also know that the fate of restaurants and their employees are inextricably tied to the wine industry, so they created an exclusive, proprietary wine with an intentionally inclusive price tag.

Koschitzky explains, “We wanted to always over-deliver, like what Giving Kitchen is doing for the people they serve. I don’t want people to think, ‘The wine is not important, it’s more for the cause.’ It’s actually great wine.”

When trying to explain the unique value of GK Wine, Hall explains, “There’s a measurement that wine geeks use called QPR which is quality-price ratio.” A good QPR refers to a wine with a low price point and high quality. “I’ll hazard a guess that you’d be hard-pressed to find any wines that are better QPRs than these.” Young says, “This is a bottle of wine that could easily be triple the price based on the winemaker, the fruit sources and the quality of wine put in the bottle.”

Many factors drive up the price of wine, chief among them the exclusivity of the wine itself. Grapes grown on certain parcels of land are more valuable than others, and farming practices for that land are also costly. It’s expensive to be a sustainable or certified organic farm and to farm a small crop of grapes that are tended by people, not machines. The real estate of vineyard space is also a considerable cost. If the soil and the climate produce exceptional fruit, the price of that land will be just as exceptional, and the cost extends to the wine vinified from that fruit.

Because of all these factors, it stands to reason that the more expensive a wine is, the better it will be. But this is not always the case, as any sommelier or seasoned food service worker could tell you. Giving Kitchen Wines fall into a unique category of wine that is affordable but exclusive, and it comes from people and places that historically do not produce affordable wine. This simply would not be possible without the generosity of Green and Koschitzky.

Winemakers spend years perfecting their craft, just as chefs spend years perfecting theirs. As Chef Chris Hall says, “the best food is not the most manipulated food, it’s just the best ingredients prepared well.” We can think of wine the same way, but the best ingredients are expensive, as are the services of a skilled winemaker who can coax the grapes into becoming the best wine they can be while knowing when to back off and let the wine speak for itself. “These are wines that are made with absolute integrity; they’re honest wines. They’re not manipulated. So the least amount of intervention possible is our approach with winemaking, starting from sourcing,” says Green.

## GK Wine — Giving Kitchen

When asked which of the three varietals from the 2018 vintage was his favorite, Green laughed and said, "It's so much like choosing children. Each one of them is super talented, of course." He then went on to extol the merits of each varietal - the "richness and texture" of the cabernet, the "lip-smacking acidity and freshness" of the chardonnay, the "salinity" of the pinot noir - all without nailing down a favorite. "I know I didn't pick just now, that was so bad. I'm gonna have to have a bottle of each."

The first vintage of GK Wine was released in December 2019 with only about 500 cases. The wine sold so well that the 2018 vintage released in July 2020 had nearly double the allocation, and there is no plan to slow down.

In the words of Chris Hall, "There's not much more alluring to me than being able to drink and do good at the same time. Just give it a try. I promise you you won't be disappointed."