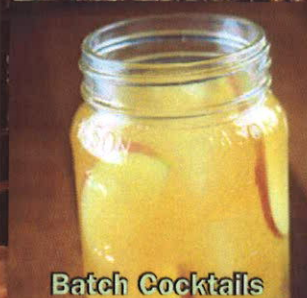


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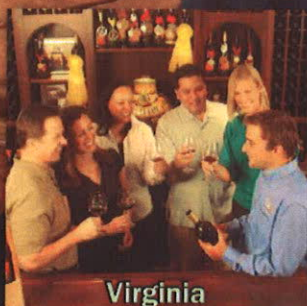
A complimentary guide to wine, spirits, beer and the lifestyle that goes with them.

November/December 2014

# TheWineBuzz



Batch Cocktails



Virginia

Thanksgiving Dinner  
Knowing and Enjoying  
Dessert Wines  
News & Reviews

**OHIO WINE:**  
Perfect Gift, Perfect Pairing  
Holiday Beverage Buying Guide



# BARNS TO BATTLEFIELDS: NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S WINE SCENE

By Mary Mihalý

It happens every time we cross the Potomac River into Virginia: as our surroundings switch from freeway-generic scenery to villages, horse farms and dips in the road, we mellow. Just like that, our moods soften from travel stress to, "Ah, we're here..."

Within a couple of miles we start spotting winery signs, and it strikes me that, with its slowed pace and milder climate, northern Virginia is a fine spot for handcrafting and sipping wine. We're not surprised to find a spirit of community and support between winemakers across the region.

Some would say that positivity comes through in the wine. I think it's partly because winery owners in northern Virginia are entrepreneurs. Their approach to winemaking is driven by the excitement of ownership; you won't find mega-corporate winemakers in this region. They are nurturing their babies here.

"We don't even sell in local wine shops," says Rob Cox, winemaker for Paradise Springs Winery in Clifton, Virginia, the closest winery to Washington, D.C. "as the crow flies." We're relaxing on Paradise Springs's terrace, surrounded by vineyard land owned by the same family for more than 300 years. Their vino is served only in high-end local restaurants and at the winery, a strategy that helps boost its image as a destination winery.

"We're more isolated out here," Cox says, "as opposed to [adjacent] Loudoun

County, where you find these large winery clusters – pun intended – five minutes apart. Once people are here, they stay here." With a light menu of charcuterie and soups, people are "more likely to stay a few hours."

Cox, a big promoter of cooperation between wineries, often hosts informal get-togethers of local winemakers. "We try each others' wine, talk about what are you shooting for in brix, fermenting temperature – we have fun with it. That's what California did in the '70s," he says. "They knew that if they shared information and helped each other create great wine, they would all benefit. A rising tide helps all ships. Now, they're wary of each other; their winemaking is like a guarded secret."

Virginia's signature wine grape is Viognier, but you'll also find most wineries selling a mix of Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Tannat, Petit Verdot, Chambourcin and specialty blends and bubbles – mostly dry. "We want our wines to be like eating the fruit, not candy that's supposed to taste like wine," says Doug Fabboli of Fabboli Cellars in Leesburg, who says he's comfortable being a "crafty, artisan, teacher kind of guy."

Relaxing on the patio outside his tasting room, Fabboli points to grapes hanging heavily on vine-covered hillsides layered around us: Chardonnay, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc. The harvest has begun.

"We need more grapes," Fabboli says, echoing a need mentioned by every winemaker with whom we spoke. "There's a real shortage of fruit here, and we don't buy grapes from outside Virginia – we just make less wine. Please, buy some land here, plant some vines."

Fabboli will even mentor you; he's been teaching consumers and new farmers alike, trying to help revitalize the region's agricultural base, for years. Even the tastings at Fabboli are educational – visitors experience pairings rather than simple sips, and the pairing list of seven bites and seven wines changes each month. Ours began with Fabboli's "Something White" blend of Viognier, Vidal Blanc and Chardonnay, paired with a pretzel crisp and honey mustard dip. The hour-long session also included a medium-bodied Cabernet Franc Reserve, aged 14 months in Hungarian oak, paired with woodsmoked cheddar; and a smoky, spicy "Royalty" traditional port, paired with a salted caramel truffle.

"We like to show what you can do with simple pairings," Fabboli says. "People don't realize how food can calm or change certain tastes."

In nearby Purcellville, Sunset Hills Vineyard's tasting room overlooks its 45 acres of rolling vineyards, but we were content to eye the indoor scenery – a 140-year-old barn, lovingly restored by six Amish brothers and furnished with period







Tasting room at Doukénie Winery in Purcellville

antiques (along with radiant floor heating for cozy winter sipping) and a huge mahogany tasting bar. This restoration blends into the owners' vision of a sustainable operation, explains wine educator (and Cincinnati native) Beth Schnur, along with minimal use of pesticides and herbicides, cooling barrels underground instead of using refrigeration, and 154 solar panels that help the winemaker "turn sunshine into wine."

Had we more time, we could have collected dozens more stories of innovation and wine passion. More than 250 wineries, scattered across 16 regions and AVAs (American Viticultural Areas), await Virginia's thirsty visitors – 42 in Loudoun County alone. A few more favorites:

- **The Winery at Bull Run in Centreville.** That farmland filling your vision outside Bull Run's tasting room? It's Manassas National Battlefield Park. After you ponder the significance of sipping wine while gazing across a Civil War battleground, head into Old Manassas for lunch.
- **8 Chains North Winery in Waterford.** Relax in their newly remodeled tasting room as you try their latest Furnace Mountain Red Reserve – firm, bold and complex. "Imagine it with a heavy meal," says our pourer, "because you wouldn't just sip this on its own." (Um, yeah I would.)
- **Doukénie Winery in Purcellville.** Our timing here was perfect; we arrived just as the first bottles of Doukénie's Bordeaux-style 2012 Vintner's Reserve became available.
- **Tarara Winery, just outside Lucketts.** If you're only having one glass, go for a "Long Bomb" or "Neveah" ("heaven" spelled backwards) blend. (Note: Tarara is one of the few notable wineries that sources grapes from outside Virginia.) If you need wineglasses, pick up a pair of Riedel tasting stemware for \$6 a glass.

Expect to spend \$5-10 at most wineries for tasting fees, and check their hours before you start exploring; we set out on a Wednesday and found some wineries closed.

And for one last treat on your drive home, stop for lunch at the Jean Bonnet Tavern on Route 30, just west of Bedford, Pennsylvania. This 1760s landmark was a meetinghouse for farmers involved in the Whiskey Rebellion, and they serve up a mean bison burger.

#### If you go

[www.VirginiaWine](http://www.VirginiaWine)  
[www.VisitLoudoun.org](http://www.VisitLoudoun.org)



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