

7 WISCONSIN WINES YOU'LL LOVE



• VINTAGES TO SAVOR •

By Scott Hallatt



As owner of The Grapevine Wine and Liquor Shop, one of the most common questions I get is: Are there really any good Wisconsin wines? When a person thinks of the great wine-making regions of the world, Wisconsin usually doesn't come to mind, but it should. We share many of the same geologic and weather traits as the wine-growing regions in Germany and the states of Oregon and New York. Wisconsin wines are now able to hold their own in international competitions and have won many awards. I put together a short list of wineries from around the state that I find particularly interesting.

Cedar Creek Vidal

The Cedar Creek Winery in Cedarburg resides in a building from the 1860s that was once the largest woolen mill west of the Alleghenies. Converted to a winery in 1972 and known as the Newberry and later the Stone Mill Winery, the Wollersheim family bought it in 1990 and it now shares the expertise of Wollersheim Winery winemaker Philippe Coquard. Cedar Creek wines remain distinctly different with their Cedar Creek Vidal leading the way.

Crisp, refreshing semi-dry white, with a touch of sweetness on the palate, this is their most award-winning wine. Enjoy this wine chilled with hors d'oeuvres, seafood, pasta, grilled foods, and sunsets.

On the weekend of September 15–16 this year Cedar Creek is hosting its annual harvest festival. They will be pouring some of their great wines, and they will feature hay rides, a craft fair, and grape-spitting contests—it's sure to be a good time. I will certainly be there this year for this annual event.

Chateau St. Croix Cheesehead White

A relative newcomer, the Chateau St. Croix Winery opened in 2004 but is already making its mark. Troy and Laura Chamberlin set out to create a winery reminiscent of the great vineyards of Germany's Rhine valley. Their whimsically named Cheesehead White shows how close they've come to that spirit.

Cheesehead White is an all American, all Wisconsin kind of white wine. Crisp fruit flavors with a touch of the tropics make up this white table wine made for cheeseheads. If you have a friend who has moved away and is feeling a bit homesick, send a bottle of the Cheesehead wine for a taste of home. The winery has events all summer and fall but their biggest event is the New Year's Eve Party and Masquerade Ball. I have attended the ball and I can say it was like nothing I have ever experienced before. Be sure to put this on your list of things to do as it is a lifetime experience.

Vetro Chardonnay

With the family tradition of making wine beginning over 100 years ago, Bill and LaVerne Vetrano truly have a passion for what they do. Bill's grandfather, Michael, began making wine in Sicily and moved to the U.S. to continue his passion here. This is a winery near and dear to my heart as my wife is Sicilian and has the same passion for life and friends as the Vetrano's do. Their Vetro Winery in Concord, Wisconsin, and their wines resonate with a rich Sicilian past. A good example of their craft is their Vetro Chardonnay.

If you are looking for a wine that's rich and full-flavored with a crisp, clean fruit taste, the Vetro Chardonnay is a good choice. Most people associate this with the aromas of



Bill and LaVerne Vetrano welcome visitors to their winery.



Chateau St. Croix Winery welcomes visitors with the feel of an Old World country estate.



Cedar Creek Vidal



Chateau St. Croix Cheesehead White



Vetro Chardonnay

apples, melons, and pears. A second fermentation makes the wine taste softer, rounder, and less acidic. Chardonnay goes well with poultry dishes, pork, or seafood and cheeses such as brie and provolone.

Von Stiehl Reisling

Von Stiehl winery is one of Wisconsin's better-known wineries. Housed in a Civil War era building listed in the National Historic Registry, Von Stiehl consistently ferments quality, award-winning wines such as Von Stiehl Reisling.

Their Reisling has the characteristic Riesling flavor in the old German tradition. Fruity and lively, it's made of grapes from Washington's Yakima Valley. Available in the "Love" label for weddings, anniversaries or any very special occasion.

Simon Creek Untouchable Red

Simon Creek, Wisconsin's largest vineyard, is located in Door County, north of Sturgeon Bay. Their state-of-the-art winery produces a variety of labels that are sure to please any palate. One of their better wines is their Untouchable Red.

Based on an American Ruby Cabernet wine, Untouchable Red has a deep red color and a medium-dry taste. Legend has it that a famous Chicago gangster tried to "persuade" Mr. Simon to sell him the Simon farm, now the location of Simon Creek Vineyard and Winery. Mr. Simon, like the brave "G-Men" of the 1930s, could not be persuaded

and was "untouched." This wine has just a hint of oak from aging and complements a faint flower bouquet. This distinctive wine should be served at room temperature and will complement a variety of meats.

Wollersheim

Domaine du Sac Red

Wollersheim Winery near Prairie du Sac is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year and is probably the best-known winery in Wisconsin. Their wines have won innumerable awards and have gained a reputation as some of the best in the United States. Wollersheim's Domaine du Sac Red is a good place to start an exploration of their labels.

Domaine du Sac Red is an estate-grown, medium-bodied red, Beaujolais-like wine, with overtones of raspberries and Bing cherries. The finish has a touch of oak and rosemary. Be sure to stop by the winery for a tour, which they offer daily. They do a great job and are very knowledgeable about not only their wine but the product in general. When I visited the winery, I was very impressed with the tour and the whole behind-the-scenes look at what goes into making wine. It is definitely worth the trip.



Once you've sampled the wines at Simon Creek Winery, the gift shop awaits with the perfect gift for family and friends.



Von Stiehl Reisling



Simon Creek Untouchable Red



Wollersheim Domaine du Sac Red



This historic Civil War era building is home to the award-winning wines of Von Stiehl.

Three Lakes Pumpkin

Yes, this wine is made from 100 percent pumpkin! With a surprising taste that is nothing like the pie, this wine from Three Lakes Winery is extremely popular. Originally made for the Three Lakes Pumpkin Festival, the wine was so popular it quickly became one of their best-sellers. They produce nothing but fruit wine at this winery, but don't let that stop you. They make some of the most distinctive



Three Lakes Pumpkin

fruit wines in the area. Be sure to check out the Cranberry Harvest wine in the fall, it is always a hit. In fact, Three Lakes Winery was the first in the nation to bottle Cranberry Wine.

Three Lakes Winery maintains its high quality by fermenting only whole fruits without the addition of fruit juices, concentrates, or additives. Their broad selection also includes blueberry, apricot, blackberry, rhubarb, raspberry, strawberry, kiwi, wild plum, and elderberry, but their most unusual is, without doubt, the pumpkin. New this year is passion fruit wine.

These are just a few of the Wisconsin wines that I like. There are 33 members of the Wisconsin Winery Association and many more besides. My best advice is to visit them and sample what they have to offer or talk to the folks at your area wine shop. In no time you will have a list of your own favorites to share with family and friends.

Scott Hallatt is the owner of The Grapevine Wine and Liquor Shop in Janesville, Wisconsin. The store specializes in select, handmade, small-batch wines from around the world and features weekly wine tastings. For more information visit www.thegrapevinewineshop.com.



Chateau St. Croix Winery and Vineyards winemaker Dennis Emslie-Drummond enjoys the fruits of his labor.

• IF YOU GO •

WISCONSIN WINERIES

Vetro Winery, LLC
N5817 Hillside Drive
Concord, WI 53178
Established: 2002
Phone: (262) 593-5123
www.VetroWine.com

Simon Creek Vineyard and Winery
5896 Bocek Road
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
Established: 2003
Phone: (920) 746-9307
www.SimonCreekVineyard.com

Cedar Creek Winery
N70 W6340 Bridge Road
Cedarburg, WI 53012
Established: 1990
Phone: (262) 377-8020
Toll Free: (800) 827-8020
www.CedarCreekWinery.com

Wollersheim Winery
7876 State Road 188
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578
Established: 1972
Phone: (608) 643-6515
Toll Free: (800) 847-9463
www.Wollersheim.com

Von Stiehl Winery
115 Navarino Street
Algoma, WI 54201
Established: 1967
Toll Free: (800) 955-5208
www.vonstiehl.com

Three Lakes Winery
6971 Gogebic Street
Three Lakes, WI 54562
Established: 1972
Phone: (715) 546-3080
Toll Free: (800) 944-5434
www.cranberrywine.com

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1998A State Road 87
St. Croix Falls, WI 54024
Established: 2004
Phone: (715) 483-2556
Toll Free: (866) 654-WINE
www.chateaustcroix.com

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Madison, WI 53718
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