

On The Vine

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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2006

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On The Vine
YADKIN VALLEY & CAROLINA WINE COUNTRY NEWS

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FOUNDER
Susan Lyons

Hot off the wine press . . .

It's all about quality

At the recent Western North Carolina Wine Conference (see Norm Oches' report on Page 8), the emphasis was on quality. Quality people. Quality processes. Quality promotions. And, most importantly, quality wines.

Every state in the nation and most countries on Earth produce wines. But only a handful are known for producing wines of consistently high quality.

As our state's viticulture industry develops, an emphasis on high-quality wines is absolutely essential. We can have spectacularly scenic vineyards, majestic architectural wonders for wineries and a high-powered marketing program, and all will be for naught if the wines don't measure up.

And we know they can and do, in most cases.

But there's a big difference between our little corner of the viticulture industry knowing we're producing some consistently fine wines and getting that word out across the broad spectrum.

We're getting plenty of great press of late. Glowing reports on national television; write-ups in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today; a raft of medals won in international competitions.

That's a start.

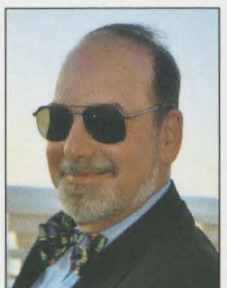
That gets people coming here; that gets them into our tasting rooms.

But there's another step, a big step, we need to take to keep them coming, and to keep them coming back:

A wine quality assurance program.

Most of the more renowned appellations have them. Generally they involve a series of tests, both quantifiable and qualifiable, under the direction of a scientific laboratory and oenological experts. The result for wines that pass is a seal of approval to be displayed on the label, a guarantee of sorts to the consumer that the wine meets exacting standards and can be bought with confidence.

Dr. Grant Holder and his team at Appalachian State University are well positioned to help develop a North Carolina Wine Quality Assurance Program. Now what's needed is the support of the N.C. Wine and Grape Council and, of course, of the wine producers themselves.



Rebel Good

Rebel Good,
Publisher



On The Cover...

Winemaker Mark Friszolowski and partners Richard Childress and Greg Johns sample their wine.

COVER PHOTO
Will & Deni McIntyre, Winston-Salem, NC
www.macfoto.com

A MERGING OF Markets

• Childress drawing NASCAR crowd into wine world

By Ed Williams

LEXINGTON — “So far, it’s been a good ride,” says Richard Childress.

On the second anniversary for one of North Carolina’s largest wineries, this seems a simple summation from a man who states matters simply, even as matters become far more complex.

Two years after opening to the public, that public is squeezing into every crevice of a sprawling and opulent 36,000-square foot Italian Renaissance-style estate.

Visitors to the tasting room, diners in the bistro, parties booking weddings, business retreats and special dinners in the banquet hall, distributors arriving for functions in the barrel room or cave — all can come with such speed that it leaves little time for Childress Vineyards’ leadership to slow down and answer: Who will we be and what will we stand for five years from now?

Richard Childress — one of NASCAR’s

more successful team owners — has built a winery and assembled a winery team that is running full out, committed to winning the hearts and palates of novice and oenophile alike.

But therein lies the complexity. Can Childress Vineyards do both — and do both really well?

Richard Childress, who brings a high profile to the North Carolina wine industry like no other, admits to finding himself at a crossroads: “We want to satisfy everybody, but it’s hard to do under one label.”

Childress Vineyards is seemingly covering all bases. It has crafted a tiered portfolio of French vinifera; a line of reserve vinifera; a special signature line; and a NASCAR Collector’s Edition line. It’s one of the rare East Coast wineries to get all five classic Bordeaux grapes in the ground for top-flight red blends aimed at serious enthusiasts.

All this atop its everyday house wines that sport a checkered flag.

While it initially focused on classic French varieties, Childress Vineyards took a more global view, first purchasing Pinot Gris and then planting its own to seize control over this wildly popular Italian varietal. It’s done the same with Riesling, a white wine grape famous in Germany, and Tempranillo, renowned in Spain’s Rioja region.

Childress didn’t stop there.

It introduced a late-harvest dessert wine from Vidal Blanc, then crafted a fruit wine from blueberries. And in time for the holidays, it hopes to release a sparkling wine.

Childress Vineyards also retooled a recent entry — an inexpensive line of Muscadine-based wines bottled under a new label called “Serendipity.”

To introduce a red, white and pink “scupperdine” is a leap for Childress, albeit an informed one given prevailing consumer tastes in the South. While many Yadkin Valley wineries distance themselves from their Muscadine brethren to the east, Childress embraced Scuppernong’s heritage, first folding it into its own brand, but recently spinning it off as a second label.

“When I got into the business, I didn’t have the intention of going in that direction,” says Childress. “But we put some feelers out and we tried it and this has really taken off . . . Right now, Serendipity is our second label.”

Says winemaker Mark Friszolowski: “We are a business. I think we’d be remiss if we didn’t look at it (Muscadine market).”

But in trying to be all things to all people, can Childress segment his wine audience and enjoy the same success he’s had in the racing realm?

Maintaining quality “all across the board”

will be the challenge and the guiding principle at Childress in the years ahead, says marketing manager Kathie Watson.

Friszolowski is excited and anxious. “As a regional winery, we’re doing well. But if we go to the next level, if we grab that tiger by the tail, can I hold on? We run out of wine now at times.”

The “Fine Swine Wine” experiment that Childress introduced for the 2005 Lexington Barbecue Festival was one example. Crafted semi-sweet to accompany flavorful pork and sell for \$10, Friszolowski made 120 cases, unsure how it would fare in a county that’s dry, in a state solidly cinched in the Bible Belt.

Within an hour, swine wine sold out.

In 2004 — its inaugural year — Childress figured to bottle 8,000 cases. It hit 13,000. In 2005, it projected 25,000 cases yet needed 28,000. Friszolowski estimates 2006 at 32,000 to 42,000 cases.

Those are heady numbers considering:

•Childress Vineyards has yet “to really aggressively go after the NASCAR fan market,” says Watson. The Childress team wonders: What if we really went after this at the event level? What if a wine were packaged in plastic or Tetra squeeze packs and sold at race events? And what happens when Childress wines are dousing Childress racers in Victory Lane on national TV?

•Distribution of Childress wine is still largely confined to North Carolina, save for pockets in South Carolina, southern Virginia and Missouri. What happens when the brand starts spreading along the East Coast?

•Estate-grown grapes from Vineyard Crossings at Childress are still young. What happens when they approach their potential?

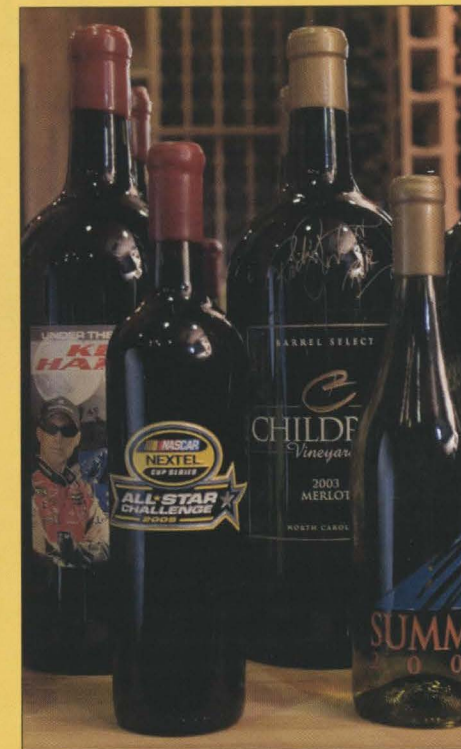
•What happens when all the retail shops and a hotel are in full riot at The Shoppes At Vineyard Crossing, a complex built on the estate in the same Italian theme as Childress Vineyards? What happens when visitors from Charlotte, Raleigh, and Charleston can stay overnight?

Richard Childress — winner of six Cup titles — sees opportunity around every turn, particularly since just under half the winery visitors are full-blown race fans.

Since 2000, NASCAR fan numbers jumped from 40 million to 75 million, he says. Increasingly, they are higher-income. Increasingly they are women. “NASCAR is not just a good ol’ boy sport anymore,” he says. And increasingly, they are shifting from beer and spirits to wine.

But before racing too far ahead, perhaps it’d be best to ease back a moment and look at where Childress Vineyards was — and is now.

From the southernmost tip of the Yadkin Valley appellation springs a \$10 million facility that conjures the Tuscan countryside. It would rise in 13 months, joining Shelton Vineyards and Biltmore Estates as a top destination wine spot.



Childress sports several lines of wines.

Vineyards surround this Italian villa where fountains greet visitors outside and inside, a well-appointed tasting room awaits, decks overlooking the estate afford bucolic views, and a bistro and banquet room await guests. Anyone venturing past this once sleepy crossroads of U.S. 64 and 52 — just 20 minutes south of Winston-Salem off Interstate 40 — is left gaping.

Childress could have invested in a winery in California or upstate New York but stuck close

to home, near his racing headquarters in Welcome, to help revitalize a local economy ravaged by tobacco and furniture job losses. He thought his winery and the inevitable spin-off businesses it could generate would provide new work and new hope.

Initially, 26 acres of the estate were planted to vine. It has since expanded to 41 acres. That is augmented by the 31 acres that Richard Childress planted at his own Hampton Road residence near Clemmons. In addition, business partner Greg Johns contributes five acres of grapes from his Gianni vineyards near Summerfield.

In its first bottling in 2004, most of the Childress wine was produced from purchased grapes. In 2005, a little more than a third of the juice in Childress wines was coming from Childress-owned vines. In 2006, half of the juice will come from its estate grapes.

Given the weekend crowds, the ramp-up in production, a wine club that’s ballooned to 1,500, Richard Childress is asked: If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?

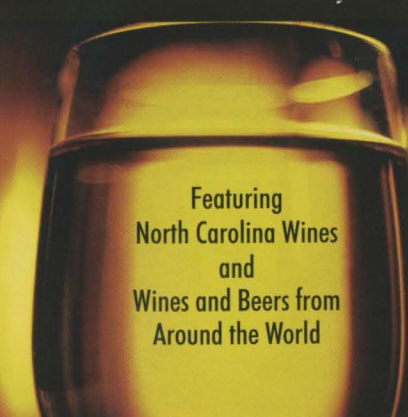
“I would have made our banquet facility four times bigger than it is now,” he says. “I would have made our bistro bigger.” Then he adds: “I wish we had built the whole thing even bigger.”



Ed Williams, Brand Marketing Manager for the News & Record in Greensboro, has written about the wine industry since 1990. His column “Uncorked” appears monthly in the News & Record. Williams’ reporting, writing and editing have received state and national awards over the last 20 years.

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A good dessert wine can be liquid candy in a glass

By Ed Williams

The Robert Mondavi winery in the Napa Valley first introduced me to dessert wine, a memory unclouded even after two decades.

The reserve tasting came with fine linen, huge leaded crystal, varietals across vintages — and the most arrogant wine guide on the planet. Dipping her snout into a fishbowl of a glass, she inhaled deeply and beckoned us to try a dessert wine she pronounced a soon-to-be classic.

Tasting this liquid candy, I declared: "This somewhat puts me in mind of a wine in North Carolina — Scuppernon. Ever hear of it?"

She snorted derisively: "This certainly is nothing of the kind. Our late-harvest Semillon is fashioned after the great Sauternes. To confuse it with Muscadine is gross injustice."

With that, she swirled her huge glass aloft in hand, tilted it noseward, sniffed with gusto and cast me an annoyed look.

Somehow in all that swirling, tilting, snuffing and brow furrowing, that dessert wine missed her lips entirely and instead gushed straight away into a nostril where that wine was greeted in a classic but disagreeable fashion, none of it doing justice to the wine.

As our wine guide spluttered and hacked and gasped, my wife turned to me and said, "That's why you don't know the difference. You've been tasting it wrong all these years."

A recent *On The Vine* tasting of North Carolina and Southwest Virginia dessert-styled wines is equally memorable, but more for its reined-in expectations and casual camaraderie.

Horizon Cellars' Guy Loeffler likens his dessert-style wines to neither fruit nor flower. "You'll begin to understand what it means when people say dessert wines can be like great sex. This is like a liquid version of the big O."

Natalie Wurz, co-owner of Stonefield Cellars, likens their red Vin de Narlé to "an artistic and decadent dessert at the end of a great meal." And while it can stand alone as dessert, she says, "a little sweet red wine, a little dark chocolate — guilt-free indulgence."

Because the sampled wines were a mix of red versus white, vinifera versus hybrid, single varietal versus blend, all with wildly ranging alcohol and sugar levels, they were neither tasted blind nor ranked. Tasted against curious palates and open minds, the panel simply noted that most of the wines did not technically qualify as classic "dessert wine."

Under federal regulatory code, a "dessert wine" must have an alcohol level "in excess of 14 percent but not in excess of 24 percent by volume," says Wendell Lee, General Counsel to the Wine Institute in California.

The wines we evaluated were crafted in a range of styles, only about half utilizing classic methods employed elsewhere around the globe to create dessert wine.

Time-honored production methods include: •Adding a neutral spirit to partially fermented wine, preserving fruit flavors while bumping alcohol levels appreciably. Examples include Port and Sherry.

•Allowing the grape to hang on the vine long after the normal harvest cycle. Longer ripening means higher sugar levels — and that bumps alcohol levels. These are often called "late har-

vest" wines. California and Australia, blessed with consistently long growing seasons, favor this method.

•Setting grape clusters aside after picking to dry and shrivel and concentrate sugar levels. Parts of Italy favor this approach.

•Leaving the grapes on the vine deep into winter to freeze. This makes it even easier to extract concentrated juice. It's often referred to as ice wine, or Eiswein in Canada and Germany.

•Allowing the beneficial Botrytis cinerea fungus to attack the grape, which consumes the water, shrivels the grape and concentrates sugar levels. Conditions for "noble rot" are not always present, but parts of France bet the house on this method.

North Carolina is neither conducive to Botrytis fungus nor ice wine. And few Tarheel winemakers have the space or inclination to let grapes raisinate indoors.

While late harvest is feasible in North Carolina, rain from tropical storm and hurricane season makes this dicey. And what rain doesn't claim, the birds, bugs, deer or bad fungus usually do.

Generally, dessert wines are produced in limited lots, bottled in half-sized bottles, priced high because of 1) high labor costs; 2) high risk involved in production; and 3) the intense unc-

tuousness and kick of the wine, a little of it going a long way.

Dessert wines should balance sweet, acid and alcohol in order to cozy up to sweet desserts. In many instances, the wine is the dessert.

The wines we sampled (and listed here in no particular order):

•2004 Shelton Vineyards Yadkin Valley Port (Cabernet Franc, Sangiovese);

•NV Childress Vineyards Starboard Red (Rabbit-eye Blueberry and brandy);

•2004 Childress Vineyards Polaris (Vidal Blanc)

•2003 AmRhein Wine Cellars Late Harvest Vidal Blanc

•2005 Westbend Vineyards Lilly B (Chardonnay)

•2004 Chateau Morrisette Frosty Dog (Vidal Blanc)

•NV RagApple Lassie Evening Sunset (Traminette, Symphony);

•NV Hanover Park Early Twilight (Niagara, Chardonnay, Viognier)

•2005 Round Peak Niagara;

•2004 Horizon Cellars Late Harvest Vidal Blanc;

•2005 Horizon Cellars Late Harvest Viognier;

•NV Stonefield Cellars Vin de Narlé (Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel);

•NV Elkin Creek Vineyard (Sangiovese, Raspberry concentrate).

Alcohol levels fluctuated from just under 11 percent (Round Peak Niagara) to 19 percent (Shelton Port). Residual sugar levels ran from 6 percent (Horizon Cellars Viognier) to 16 percent (Childress Polaris). Flavors ranged from crisply pronounced fruit (Chateau Morrisette Frosty Dog) to blowsy complex honey, fig, pineapple and banana (Westbend Lilly B).

Four of the wineries — Childress, Horizon Cellars, AmRhein and Chateau Morrisette — leveraged Vidal Blanc, a grape accustomed to dessert-style wines on the East Coast.

Only four of the wines surpassed 14 percent alcohol levels (Shelton, Childress Starboard, Stonefield Cellars and Elkin Creek). Two (Shelton and Childress) mirrored Portugal's production method by fortifying partially fermented juice with neutral brandy.

"We originally produced our Yadkin Valley Port to have an appropriate wine to serve with dessert at dinner tastings," said Shelton Vineyards president George Denka. "It proved so popular that our first vintage (2002) sold out in three months." Production was ramped up five times for the current port.

Kathie Watson, marketing manager for Childress Vineyards, says its Starboard — bursting with blueberry flavors and made in the Port style — "can be used in a port reduction sauce, to rehydrate fruit, pour over ice cream or accompany chocolate or cheesecake."

Four wineries — AmRhein, Westbend, Horizon Cellars, and Childress — achieved sweeter levels in their white wines by allowing extended hang time in the vineyard.

In the case of Westbend and Chateau Morrisette, their respective Chardonnay and Vidal Blanc grapes were frozen and then pressed to concentrate flavors. "As the sugar drizzled from the frozen block of ice, we stopped collecting the sugar syrup at 30 Brix. We ended with 40 Brix," said Westbend winemaker Mark Terry. "I prefer a natural sugar method than artificial methods which can often be noticed on the palate."

Brix is a term suggestive of sugar level and in North Carolina, grape growers routinely achieve sugar levels of 19 to 21 Brix.

RagApple Lassie produced a nicely-balanced wine utilizing 60 percent Traminette and 40

percent Symphony. "The Traminette has a nice spicy, citrus character derived from its Gewurztraminer parentage," said its winemaker, Linda King. "The Symphony adds the tropical fruit and peachy characteristics derived from its Muscat parentage."

Legal definitions aside, Shelton's George Denka draws a distinction between true dessert wines and wines crafted in a dessert style: "I perceive a traditional dessert wine to be just that — made by a traditional wine-making method and a long time-honored history of properly being served after dinner, either alone or with desserts, fruit or cheeses: Port, Oloroso, Sherry, and late harvest botrytised wines like Sauternes, Mombazzillac, German Beerenauslese, Eiswein or Trockenbeerenauslese."

"A 'dessert-style' wine in my mind is a non-traditional wine produced from grapes or fruits that don't have the tradition and often times are produced by non-traditional wine-making methods (infusion, blending multiple fruit types, etc.)"



Ed Williams, Brand Marketing Manager for the News & Record in Greensboro, has written about the wine industry since 1990. His column "Uncorked" appears monthly in the News & Record. Williams' reporting, writing and editing have received state and national awards over the last 20 years.



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Conference provides tips on wine marketing

By Norm Oches

What's the North Carolina Western Wine Conference's claim to fame? Probably its emphasis on wine marketing and how quality assurance and wine tourism fit into the wine marketing mix.

In his opening remarks at the July meeting in Boone, Dr. Grant Holder (head of the viticulture and enology program at Appalachian State University and organizer of the annual conference) pointed out that this conference gives people from different sectors of the industry a chance to exchange ideas on neutral ground.

Mike Evans, head of the Hospitality and Tourism Management program at App State, started off the main discussion by saying that the key to selling North Carolina wine successfully is good food and wine pairings.

Charles Hardin, former restaurant owner and current executive director of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, told the audience he had found the perfect way to do just that. He and his staff put together the first Blue Ridge Wine Festival in Blowing Rock this past April, when more than 2,000 visitors showed up for the winemakers dinners and related events. Each participating restaurant served meals to accompany wines from one of 15 North Carolina wineries. In addition to the wine dinners, there were cooking classes, wine pairing seminars and viticulture classes, also hosted by the Chamber.

Charles's Tip of the Day: At events like these, you have to serve a lot of people a lot of wine and a number of food courses, all in a very concentrated period of time. It requires a lot more glassware, china and utensils than is normally kept on hand at a typical restaurant. He advises that if you

plan to host a similar event, stock up on tableware beforehand.

Inez Ribustello was assistant cellar master at Windows on the World in New York City when 9/11 happened. She returned to her hometown of Tarboro to recharge her batteries. Together, she and her husband opened what has turned out to be a very successful venture called On the Square Restaurant and Wine Store. She says her customers are very interested in restaurants that serve dishes made with local ingredients, and that includes locally made wine. She has found North Carolina's Viogniers, Reislings, Cab Francs and Syrahs most popular.

Inez's Tip of the Day: Inez and her husband own a wine shop located right next to the restaurant. After patrons have gone through a bottle (or two) of wine in the restaurant (often at \$20 to \$40 a bottle), it's not uncommon for them to go next door and buy a case of the same to take home. Good for the bottom line.

Jesse Williams, GM and executive chef of The Kitchen at Elkin Creek restaurant, part of Mark Greene's Elkin Creek Vineyard operation, emphasized, "It's not only about the food and wine, it's about the experience." Providing the romance of the vine is key to selling wine in a restaurant setting," says Williams.

Jesse's Tip of the Day: At a restaurant, customers want to be led through the experience of food and wine. Learn how to lead.

Suzie Blanchard is a restaurant owner with a mission. As co-owner of The Inn at Meander Plantation in Locust Dale, Va., she says there are no out-of-state wines on their wine list. They offer only Virginia-made wines, and are proud of it. Blanchard believes bed and breakfasts are best at promoting local wines. B&B owners tend to

have more time to spend with individual patrons than do restaurant or hotel owners. She suggests offering to train the B&B staff — if they like the wine, they will be more likely to talk about it with customers. B&Bs are a very personal business. "We sell who we like," says Blanchard. "It's key that winemakers call on restaurants. It's a fact of life in the restaurant business; if the restaurant likes the winemaker, it will be more likely to buy the wines."

"Make sure that as a winery you help restaurants pair your wine and their food," says Blanchard. Many restaurant owners are not all that skilled at matching up food and wine, particularly local wines. Offer to do wine pairing dinners. Make it easy for the restaurant to get your wines. The winery owner or winemaker should deliver the first few cases to make sure all the restaurant's questions and concerns are answered. Also, Blanchard gets a lot of customers who found her restaurant listed on a winery's website. And they appreciate the business. "And don't be territorial about your wines," advises Blanchard. Tell visitors to your winery about other wineries in the area. People are more impressed if wineries are part of a group, like a wine trail.

Suzie's Tip of the Day: "If you own a restaurant or wine shop, make a big deal about your own state's wine. Consumers today want to be led through the wine experience. Who can better talk about how the wine is made, where the grapes are

grown, and what wine goes with what food than people who are tuned in to their state's wine industry?"

Mark Chien, a University of California-Davis grad, is Pennsylvania's wine grape cooperative extension agent for over 1,800 acres of vineyards. He is adamant that states put more dollars into research and development in support of their wine industries. "A good case in point," says Chien, "is Australia." In the mid-'90s, the Australian government put a plan in place to make Australia a major wine exporter in 25 years. Guess what? After putting millions into research on new varieties, winemaking practices, and wine marketing programs that would benefit their growers and wineries, they met their objective — in only 10 years. Now China is about to make the leap into the wine biz. With thousands of acres of grapes already in the ground, says Chien, China could become a net exporter of wines to the U.S. before we know it.

Chien says the U.S. needs to look seriously at developing a quality evaluation system for the wine industry. Unfortunately, it's a political hot potato. Wineries love it when they are told their wines are great. But they get very upset when an outside agency tells them they have some problems to address. Yet, there are some good examples out in the marketplace showing how a quality assurance program can help a new wine industry. Ontario, Canada, for example, has in place a very stringent Vintner Quality Alliance (VQA) program, and consumer confidence in Ontario wines has jumped appreciably since the program was implemented.

Mark's Tip of the Day: Finding the best growing site is key to growing good grapes. Sounds logical, right? "Yet," says Chien, "too many people follow the family farm concept of growing grapes." That is, they take the family farm and retrofit it to grow grapes. Not always a happy marriage. Chien worked for many years in Oregon and says Oregon emerged as a major grape-growing state only when people decided to find the best sites to grow grapes and then bought the land to put their vineyard on.

Dr. Murli Dharmadhikari, former director of the Mid-America Grape and Wine Center, recently joined Iowa State University as its extension enologist. His focus is on wine quality certification. Iowa has 56 wineries and over 200 growers and is working to set up a Vintner Quality Alliance system. He pointed out that Australia has had a similar program in place for years; he hopes other states will soon adopt a similar program.

Murli's Tip of the Day: A VQA system improves overall wine quality in a state, and more importantly, it increases the consumer's understanding of what makes a good wine good.

Other speakers at this year's conference included:

•Catherine Rabb: She teaches "Principles of Beverage Service" at Johnson & Wales University's brand new campus in Charlotte. With students from 42 states and 11 countries and an enviable 98% job placement rate, Johnson & Wales is quickly becoming the wine and food mecca of the Southeast.

Antony Santori, Garrett French, and John Ashenbrenner: They work for the website search



Mark Chien speaks at the conference.

engine optimization service MarketSmart Interactive. They told the audience that every wine website should market North Carolina as a great wine destination and include a wine trail page, a regional overview, and a North Carolina page.

Dr. Sara Spayd: She has taken over the Viticulture Extension spot at NC State after 26

years at Washington State University, where she watched Washington grow from just 15 wineries in 1980 to 400 today. Sara told the audience that in the absence of a statewide quality assurance program, many wine areas in Washington State have taken the bull by the horns and set up their own system (with her help).

Mark Friszolowski from Childress Vineyards, Gill Giese from Surry Community College and Margo Knight from the North Carolina Wine & Grape Council were also on hand to add their North Carolina perspective.

Speakers from both inside and outside the state emphasized how important it is, particularly in the face of stiff competition from out-of-state wines, that Raleigh step up to the plate and get more involved in funding research, promoting wine tourism and putting their support behind some type of quality assurance program. Why? Because the one message that came across loud and clear at this year's North Carolina Western Wine Conference was that quality assurance, good winemaking and a strong focus on tourism go hand in hand toward building a solid wine industry in any state. And that includes North Carolina.



Norm Oches designs and builds vineyards in North Carolina. He can be reached at noches@charter.net.

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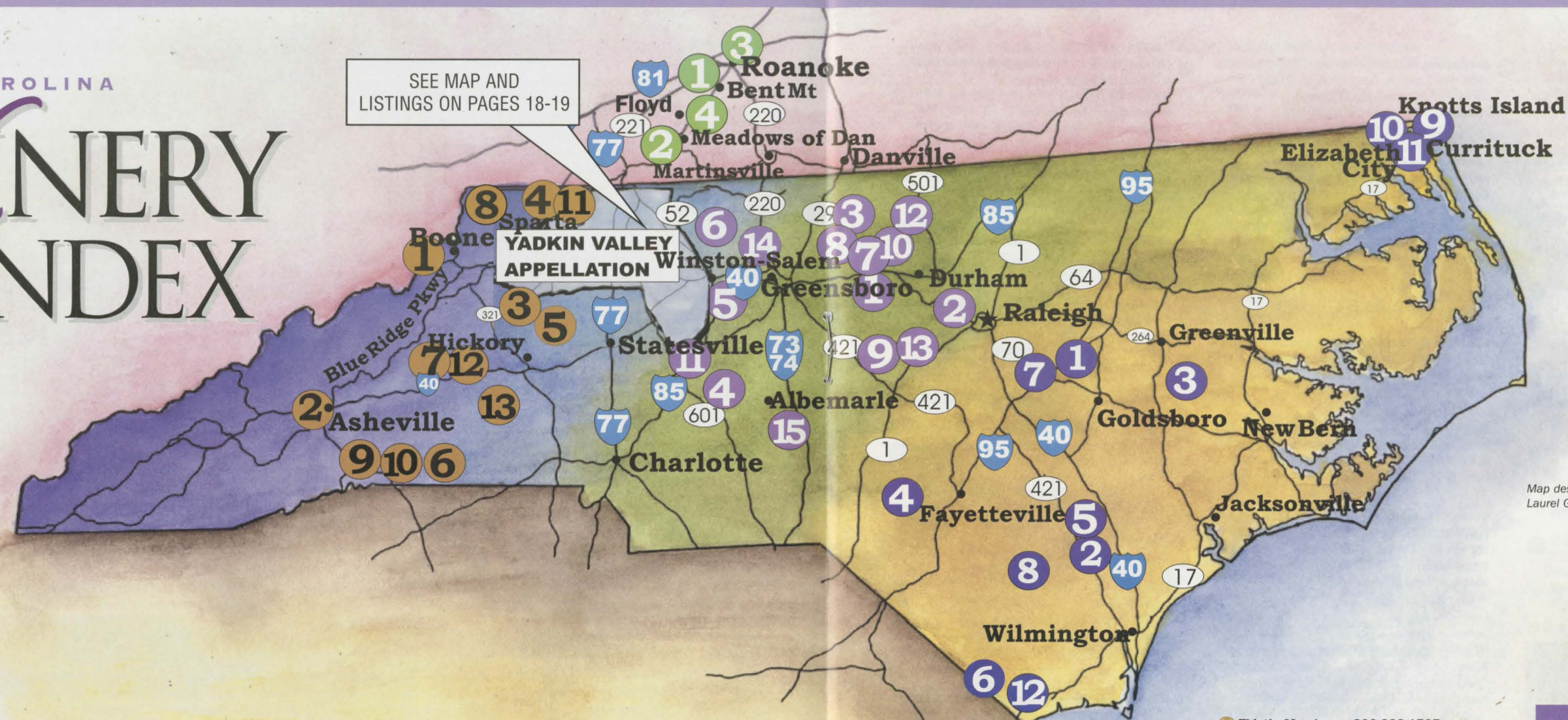
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WINERY INDEX



Map designed by Kim Myers,
Laurel Gray Vineyards

MOUNTAIN REGION

- 1 Banner Elk Winery 828-260-1790**
135 Gualtney Road, Banner Elk, NC 28604
Owners: Dr. Dick Wolfe and Angelo Accetturo
Website: www.blueberryvilla.com
Hours: Opening July 20. Call for hours.
Location: Avery County — from Banner Elk, north on N.C. 194 1.5 mi. Then left on Gualtney Road. Winery is 1/4 mi. on right.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Seyval Blanc, Blueberry, red and white blends.
- 2 Biltmore Estate Winery 800-543-2961**
One North Pack Square, Asheville, NC 28801
Owners: Bernard DeLille, VP/Winemaker
Website: www.biltmorewine.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., noon-7 p.m.
Location: Buncombe County — On the grounds of Biltmore Estate in Asheville. Take I-40 Exit 50A and go north on Hwy 25 two blocks to Biltmore House entrance.
Wine List: French varietals, blends.
- 3 Cerminaro Vineyard 828-754-9306**
4399 Wilkesboro Boulevard, Boomer, NC 28606
Owners: Joe and Deborah Cerminaro
Hours: Sat., noon-6 p.m. Other days by appointment.

ment.

- 4 Chateau Laurinda 800-650-3236**
690 Reeves Ridge Rd., Sparta, NC 28675
Owners: Linda and Larry Ehlers and Family
Website: www.chateaulaurindawinery.com
Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., noon-5 p.m.
Location: Alleghany County — From I-77, take Exit 83 to Hwy 21 towards Sparta to 221 South. Turn right on Hwy 93. Go 1.5 miles to 2nd road on left.
Wine List: French varietals, fruit wines, Muscadine varieties
- 5 Ginger Creek Vineyards 828-312-4362**
858 John Cline Road, Taylorsville, NC 28681
Owners: Dwight and Sharon Austin
Hours: Thurs.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sun. by appt.
Location: Caldwell County — Take US 64 west from I-40. Left on Caldwell Pond Rd; in 1.5 miles, turn right on John Cline Rd. Turn left at end of pavement in 1 mi.
Wine list: Carlos, Scuppernong, Noble, Blackberry, Apple

- 6 Green Creek Winery 828-863-2182**
413 Gilbert Road, Columbus, NC 28722
Owner: Alvin Pack et al
Hours: Thurs.-Sun, 1-5 p.m., or by appointment
Website: www.greencreekwinery.com
Location: Polk County — Exit 167 off U.S.74, south on N.C. 9, 3 mi. to Landrum Rd. Then right 1 mi. to Gilbert Rd. Winery on left.
Wine List: American Chardonnay, American Chardonnay Un-Oaked, N.C. Estate Grown Chardonnay, N.C. Estate Grown Cabernet Franc Late Harvest Dessert Wine, American Merlot, Estate Grown Chambourcin Rose and Estate Grown Cabernet Franc Rose.
- 7 Lake James Cellars 828-584-4551**
204 E. Main St., Glen Alpine, NC 28628
Owners: Mike and Betty Fowler
Website: www.lakejamescellars.com
Hours: Tues.-Sat, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: From I-40, take Exit 100 to downtown Glen Alpine.
Wine list: French varietals, Italian blends, fruit blends.
- 8 New River Winery 336-846-1498**
106 N. Jefferson Ave., West Jefferson, NC 28694 (in Bohemia Gallery)
Owner: New River Wineries, Inc.
Winemaker: Dan Strickland

Website: www.newriverwineries.com
Hours: Tues.-Sat., 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Ashe County — downtown West Jefferson.
Wine List: Bohemia Red, Bohemia White, Back Porch Blueberry.

- 9 Rockhouse Vineyards 828-863-2784**
1525 Turner Rd., Tryon, NC 28782
Owners: Lee Griffin and Marsha Cassidy
Website: www.rockhousevineyards.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Polk County — Take Hwy 74 to Hwy 9, Exit 167. Travel 2.2 miles south on Hwy 9 to Turner Rd. Turn left on Turner Rd.
Wine List: French varietals.
- 10 The Teensy Winery 828-287-7763**
3661 Painters Gap Rd., Union Mills, NC 28167
Owner: Bob Howard
Hours: By appointment only
Location: Rutherford County — Take I-40 Rutherfordton exit. Take Hwy 221 south to Thermal City. Turn west on SR 1321 then right on SR 1328 (Painters Gap Rd.).
Wine List: French varietals.

- 11 Thistle Meadow 800-233-1505**
102 Thistle Meadow, Laurel Springs, NC 28644
Thomas R. Burgiss
Website: www.thistlemeadowwinery.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m.; Sun., 2-4 p.m.
Location: Alleghany County — Off Blue Ridge Parkway, Milepost 246, then 3 miles on Elk Knob Road.
Wine List: French varietals, Italian blends, Fruit blends.

- 12 Waldensian Heritage Wines 828-879-3202**
4940 Villar Lane NE, Valdese, NC 28690
Owners: Joel Dalmás, Joe Jacumin, Freddy Leger, John Bourous, Tom Garrou
Hours: Thurs.-Sun., 1 p.m.-6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. by appt.
Location: Burke County — Take I-40 exit 112 North to Valdese. Go north on Eldred St. to N. Laurel St. Turn left on Villar Lane (2.4 miles from I-40).
Wine List: American blends.

- 13 WoodMill Winery 704-736-7733**
1350 WoodMill Winery Lane, Vale, NC 28168
Owners: Beverly and Larry Cagle and family
Website: www.woodmillwinery.com
Hours: Thurs., Fri, Sun., 1-6 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Lincoln County — I-85 Exit 17 north on U.S. 321. Exit 24 north on NC 27 to down town Lincolnton. Go north 8 mi., then right 2 mi. on Cat Square Rd; then left 1/2 mile on Beam Lumber Rd.; then right on John Beam Rd.; winery 1 mi. on right.
Wine List: Muscadine, blueberry, scuppernong.

PIEDMONT REGION

- 1 Benjamin Vineyards & Winery 336-376-1080**
6516 Whitney Road, Graham (Saxapahaw), NC 27253
Owners: Andy and Nancy Zeman
Website: www.benjaminvineyards.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sun., noon-5 p.m.
Location: Alamance County — Take Exit 154 off I-40/85 south 8.5 miles. Cross Hwy. 54 and continue 4 miles. Left on Whitney Road. Vineyard 1.2 miles on left.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Chardone, Sauvignon Blanc, Chambourcin, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carlos, Magnolia, Scuppernong, Hunt and fruit-muscadine blends.
- 2 Chatham Hill Winery 800-808-6768**
3500 Gateway Centre Blvd. #200
Morrisville, NC 27560
Owners: Marek Wojciechowski and Jill Winkler
Website: www.chathamhillwine.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Wake County — Take I-40 Exit 285 toward Morrisville on Aviation Parkway. Take first right at Gateway Centre Boulevard. Right onto Northgate Ct. at 3500 sign.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah, Zinfandel, Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Chardonnay, Viognier, Sweet Carolina Red, White, Christmas Red, Christmas White, and fruit blends.
- 3 Creek Side Winery 336-584-4117**
3515 Stoney Creek Church Road, Elon, NC 27244

Owners: Angie and Fred Wallace
Website: www.creeksidewinery.com
Hours: Mon., Thurs.-Sat., noon-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-6 p.m., or by appt.
Location: Alamance County — Take Exit 140 off I-40 and stay on University Drive to the end. Right on Burlington, Ave, left onto Shallowford Church Road, Left onto NC 87 for 6.6 mi., right on Stoney Creek Church Road, winery 1.3 mi. on left.
Wine list: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Stoney Creek Red, Deep Creek Red, Shallow Creek Rosé, Creek Side Sunset, Red Raspberry and Peach.

4 Dennis Vineyards 800-230-1743
 24043 Endy Rd., Albemarle, NC 28001
Owners: Pritchard and Sandon Dennis
Website: www.dennisvineyards.com
Hours: Mon-Sat, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; seasonal Sunday hours, call ahead.
Location: Stanly County — From Albemarle, take NC 24-27 west approx. 5 miles; at caution light at Endy Road, turn right; winery 1/2 mile on left.
Wine List: Muscadine varietals in Dry, Semi-Dry and Sweet; Strawberry, Blueberry, Blackberry and Cherry fruit wines.

5 Garden Gate Vineyards 336-751-3794
 261 Scenic Drive, Mocksville, NC 27028
Owners: Bob and Sonya Whitaker
Website: www.gardengatevineyards.com
Hours: Wed.-Sat. 12-5 p.m.; Call for Sun. hours or by appt.
Location: Davie County — Exit 168 off I-40 to East US 64; right on Green Hill Rd.; left on County Home Rd.; right on Scenic Drive; vineyard on right
Wine List: Scuppernong, Raspberry, Scarlet Blush, Muscadine, Blackberry, Blueberry, Strawberry, JitterBug.

6 Germanton Vineyard & Winery 336-969-2075
 3530 Hwy 8 and 65, Germanton, NC 27019
Owners: Judy and David Simpson
Website: www.germantongallery.com
Hours: Tues-Fri, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Call Sun. hours. Tastings only; no tours
Location: Stokes County — In Germanton. Tasting room in gallery on corner of Hwy. 8 and Friendship Rd. (8 miles north of W-S.)
Wine List: Niagara, Sweet Red, Blush, Seyval, Chardonnay, Chambourcin, Merlot, Vermillion.

7 Glen Marie Winery 336-578-3938
 1838 Johnson Road, Burlington, NC 27217
Owners: Glendale and Joyce Marie Dickey
Website: www.glenmariewinery.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sun., noon-6 p.m.
Location: Alamance County — From I-85, take Exit 150, proceeding north; right at fourth light to Bason Road; then left on Mebane Rogers Road; go over the lake and right on Johnson Road; fifth house on left.
Wine List: Syrah, Sweet Marie, Dallas Red, Chambourcin, Summer's Promise, Golden Nugget, Scuppernong, Chardonnay, Muscadine, Carolina Springtime.

8 Grove Winery 336-584-4060
 7360 Brooks Bridge Rd, Gibsonville, NC 27249
Owner: Max Lloyd
Winemaker: Bob Moncsko
Website: www.grovetwinery.com
Hours: Fri.-Sat., noon- 5 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Guilford County — From 29, take Brown Summit exit; go east 7.6 mi. on 150 and Osceola-Ossipee Rd; left on Brooks Bridge Rd. Winery .6 mi. on right.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Niagara, Eno River White, Sangiovese, Nebbiolo, Norton.

9 Horizon Cellars 919-742-1404
 466 Vineyard Ridge, Siler City, NC
Owner: Guy Loeffler
Winemaker: Chris Pearmund
Website: www.horizoncellars.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., noon-6 p.m.
Location: Chatham County — From U.S. 421, take Exit 168 right 1 mile to Old 421. Left on Old 421 .5 mi. to Vineyard Ridge. Right .4 mi.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chambourcin, Viognier, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Prestige Reserve, Late Harvest Vidal, Carolina Comfort.

10 Iron Gate Vineyards & Winery 919-304-9463
 2540 Lynch Store Road, Mebane, NC 27302
Owners: Gene and Debbie Stikeleather
Website: www.irongatevineyards.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-6 p.m.
Location: Alamance County — Exit 153 off I-40; approx. 3 mi. N. of Mebane on NC 119.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chambourcin, Pack House Red, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Brightleaf White, Flue Fire Sweet White, Dixie Dawn.

11 Old Stone Vineyard & Winery 704-279-0930
 6245 Hwy. 52, Salisbury, NC 28146
Owner: Mark Brown
Website: www.osvwinery.com
Hours: Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Rowan County — Take Exit 76 off I-85 onto US 52 South. Winery is 5 miles on left (1 mi. south of town of Granite Quarry).
Wine List: White and Red Muscadine in dry to sweet styles, Carlos Riesling, Noble Cabernet and Peach.

12 Rock of Ages Winery & Vineyard 336-364-7625
 1890 Charlie Long Road, Hurdle Mills, NC 27541
Owners: Kevin and Kimberly Moore
Winemaker: Kevin Moore
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 1-5 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., 1-6 p.m.
Location: Person County — From Burlington, take N.C. 49 north. Inside Person County, turn right on Charlie Long Road. Winery is 1.9 mi. on right.
Wine List: Chardonnay (steel), Chardonnay (oaked), Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot, Semi-Dry Muscadine, Sweet Muscadine.

13 SilkHope Winery 919-7545-5696
 701 Duncan Farm Road, Siler City, NC 27344
Owner: Wally Butler
Hours: Sat.-Sun., noon-5 p.m.; weekdays by appt.
Location: Chatham County — Off U.S. 64 Bypass at Exit 381, north on N.C. 87 1.8 miles to Silk Hope Gum Springs Road. Left 2.5 miles. Winery on left at intersection with Emerson Cook Road.
Wine List: Vidal Blanc, Sparkling White Viognier, Sparkling White Chambourcin, Grand Vista, Red Roots, Chambourcin.

14 Stonefield Cellars 336-644-9908
 8220 Hwy. 68 N., Stokesdale, NC 27357
Owners: Robert and Natalie Wurz
Winemaker: Robert Wurz
Hours: Thurs.-Sat., noon-6 p.m.; Sun, 1-6 p.m., or by appt.
Website: www.stonefieldcellars.com
Location: Guilford County — North off I-40 at Exit 210. Take NC 68 north 13 miles. Winery on right at intersection with NC 65 (entrance on NC 65).

Wine List: European varietals, French/American hybrids and blends.

15 Stony Mountain Vineyards 704-982-0922
 26370 Mountain Ridge Road, Albemarle, NC 28001
Owners: Ken, Marie and Devron Furr
Hours: Fri.-Sat., 12-6 p.m.; other days by appt.
Website: www.stonymountainvineyards.com
Location: Stanly County — Take Hwy 24-27 East from Albemarle. Turn left at Stone Mountain sign. Turn right on Mountain Ridge Rd.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot and American varietals.

SANDHILL/COASTAL REGION

1 A Secret Garden Winery 919-734-0260
 1008 Airport Road, Pikeville, NC 27863
Owners: Gerald and Linda Hall
Hours: Thurs.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-6 p.m.
Website: www.asecretgardenwinery.com
Location: Wayne County — From U.S. 70, take N.C. 117 North to Exit 94 (Pikeville). Turn right. Straight for 2 mi., then right onto Airport Road. Winery 1.25 mi. on left.
Wine List: Carlos, Noble, blends.

2 Bannerman Vineyard 910-259-5474
 2624 Stag Park Rd., Burgaw, NC 28425
Owners: Scot and Colleen Bannerman
Website: www.bannermanvineyard.com
Hours: Wed.-Sat., noon-4 p.m., or by appt.
Location: Pender County — Take I-40 Exit #398. Turn West on NC Hwy 53. Go 1 mile and turn left on Stag Park Rd and go 2.5 miles.
Wine List: Sweet White Oak Blend, Semi-Sweet White Oak Blend, Sweet Bay Blush, Red Oak Sweet, Red Oak Semi-Sweet, Weeping Willow, Marilyn.

3 Bennett Vineyards 877-762-9463
 6832 Bennett Vineyards Rd., Edward, NC 27821
Owners: Buddy Harrell and Robert Thornton
Website: www.ncwines.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 2-5 pm. Please call ahead.
Location: Beaufort County — 35 miles south of Greenville, off Hwy 33. Follow signs.
Wine List: American blends.

4 Cypress Bend Vineyards 910-369-0411
 21904 Riverton Road, Wagram, NC 28396
Owners: Tina and Dan Smith
Website: www.cypressbendvineyards.com
Hours: Wed.-Fri., Sun., noon-6 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Scotland County — Off US 401 (10 mi. north of Laurinburg) in Wagram, right on Riverton Rd. Winery is 3 mi. on left.
Wine List: Muscadine and Carlos blends.

5 Duplin Winery 800-774-9634
 P.O. Box 756, Rose Hill, NC 28458
Owners: David Fussell and family
Website: www.duplinwinery.com
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Fri., 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Duplin County — Take I-40 exit 380. Right on Hwy 117.
Wine List: Muscadine blends.

6 Grapefull Sisters Vineyard 910-653-2944
 4903 Ramsey Ford Road, Tabor City, NC 28463
Owners: Sheila Suggs Little and Amy Suggs
Website: www.grapefullsistersvineyard.com
Hours: Wed-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Columbus County — South off NC 904 from Dulah about 1.5 mi. Vineyard on left.
Wine List: Muscadine and Carlos blends.

7 Hinnant Family Vineyard 919-965-3350
 826 Pine Level Micro Rd., Pine Level, NC 27568
Owners: Willard and Bob Hinnant

Website: www.hinnantvineyards.com
Hours: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun. 12:30 p.m.-5 p.m.
Location: Johnston County — From Raleigh take I-40 east to US 70 East. Go 30 mi., then left at Peedin Ave. Vineyard 2 mi. on right.
Wine List: Muscadine varieties, Norton and fruit wines.

8 Lu Mil Vineyard 910-866-5819
 474 Suggs-Taylor Road, Dublin, NC 28332
Owner: Lu Mil Vineyard, Inc.
Website: www.lumilvineyard.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-6 p.m.
Location: Bladen County — South at I-95 Exit 46 on NC 87 25 mi. to Dublin. Left on 4th St. for 1/2 mi., then right on Suggs-Taylor Rd. Vineyard on right.
Wine List: Bladen Blush, Cape Owen Red, Taylor Divine, Merry Christmas, Alcohol-free wines and ciders.

9 Martin Vineyards 252-429-3542
 P.O. Box 186, Knotts Island, NC 27950
Owners: David and Jeanie Martin
Website: www.martinvineyards.com
Hours: Daily, noon-5 p.m. (closed Wednesdays)
Location: Currituck County — From Rt. 168, take scenic free ferry (800-BY FERRY) across Currituck Sound to Knotts Island. Follow NC 615 north 2.7 miles to Martin Farm Lane.
Wine List: French varietals, Muscadine varieties, Fruit wines.

10 Moonrise Bay Vineyard 866-888-9463
 134 Moonrise Bay Landing, Knotts Island, NC 27950
Owners: Richard and Kate Morris
Website: www.moonrisebaywine.com
Hours: Daily, noon-5 p.m.
Location: Currituck County — From Virginia Beach, take Princess Anne Rd. south to Knotts Island. Bear left at the Knotts Island Market and proceed one mile to vineyard on left. Or take the Ferry from Currituck, NC.
Wine List: French varietals, French hybrids, Fruit wines, American varietals

11 Sanctuary Vineyards 800-637-2446
 6957 Carotake Highway, Jarvisburg, NC 27947
Owners: Tom and Jerry Wright
Website: www.sanctuaryvineyards.com
Hours: Sat.-Sun., tasting room open.
Location: Currituck County — Off Hwy. 158 in Jarvisburg.
Wine List: Coastal Collage, The Lightkeeper, Moonrise Bay wines.

12 Silver Coast Winery 910-287-2800
 6680 Barbeque Rd., Ocean Isle Beach, NC 28469
Owners: John and Maryann Azzato
Website: www.silvercoastwinery.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., noon-5 p.m.

Location: Brunswick County — From Hwy. 17 (7 mi. north of S.C. border) take Hwy. 904 west. After 1.5 miles, take right on Russtown Rd. After 1.5 miles, take 4th right on Barbeque Rd.
Wine List: French Varietals, French Hybrids, Blends.

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

1 AmRhein Wine Cellars 540-929-4632
 9243 Patterson Drive, Bent Mountain, VA 24059
Website: www.amrheinwinecellars.com
Hours: Fri.-Sun., noon-5 p.m. or by appointment
Wine List: French Varietals, Blends

2 Chateau Morrisette 540-593-2865
 Floyd, VA 24091 (Milepost 171.5 on Blue Ridge Parkway)
Owners: Morrisette family.
Website: www.thedogs.com
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; (call for restaurant hours)
Wine List: European and proprietary blends. The Black Dog, Our Dog Blue, Angel Chardonnay.

3 Valhalla Vineyards 540-725-9463
 6500 Mt. Chestnut Road, Roanoke, VA 24018
Website: www.valhallawines.com
Hours: Fri, 4-7 p.m.; Sat, noon-5 p.m., Sun, 1-5 p.m.
Wine List: Fine French and Italian Varietals.

4 Villa Appalaccia Winery 540-593-3100
 752 Rock Castle Gorge, Floyd, VA 24091
Website: www.villaappalaccia.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun., 12-4 p.m.
Wine List: Italian Varietals and Blends.

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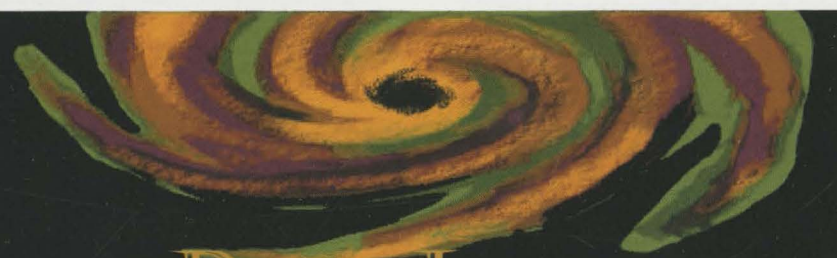
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ASK THE WINEMAKER

By Stephen Rigby, winemaker,
Raffaldini Vineyards



Getting better with age

If you're the one who read my last article, you may remember I was writing about the idea that there is so much more to food and wine enjoyment than just having sugar in everything. I thought about that again the other day when sitting in one of the many fine Mexican restaurants I enjoy visiting. Personally I think the flavors, textures, and aromas of Mexican food are best complemented by a good cold beer. So that's what I ordered. Then I looked around the full restaurant (it was a prime feasting time of day where we had already had to wait for a table) and could not find one single person not having either a sweet soft drink or iced tea with their meal. I can't confirm everyone's tea was sweet, but I'd bet the percentages were pretty high. Anyway, this is just an innocent observation, but I see we still have the great challenge before us to continually demonstrate how foods and accompanying beverages can be so much more deeply experienced and enjoyed (in my very humble opinion) if they're not wrapped with that easy to swallow covering of sugar.

I couldn't resist making that comment, but that's not what's really on my mind. Harvest is. The timing of this writing is when we are deep into this year's "gathering" (early October). Though there have been a few challenging times, mostly centered on occasional rain incidents, I think overall we're looking at a really good, high quality harvest. Once we got into the ripening season, temperatures began to drop a bit and we've had some nice cool nights and moderately warm and sunny days which should help provide good aroma and flavor development in the fruit. The '06s have great potential.

Everyone has one more year of age on their vine-

yard, and if as has often been claimed, older and more mature vines tend to provide "richer" fruit, then we're all one more year down the road in that direction. I'm convinced I am noticing changes in our own fruit year by year.

Having seen and experienced the evolution of wines over the last couple of decades in neighboring and somewhat similar Virginia, as well as older North Carolina vineyards, and also on occasion having had the opportunity to converse with wine folks from aged European vineyards, I think this concept has credence (I note European instead of Californian here because it is my belief that similarities of our climate and growing conditions and therefore the wines will be much more "European-like" than "Californian-like"...you're free to disagree). Virginia has more "old" vineyards than we do, but it's only a matter of time.

I also think that the concept of "mature vines = better wines" gives us much to look forward to because so many of the wines that are coming out of our maturing vineyards are already very high quality products. Don't take my word for it as a biased industry participant because, if you seek them out, you'll find there are numerous examples of North Carolina wines gaining the approval and attention of others throughout the nation and beyond: medals from prestigious national and international wine competitions, coverage and glowing reviews from the "big time" wine media, and even stories from such places as MSNBC and ABC news that I've seen recently, as examples.

Now the situation of having more mature vines isn't the only thing providing a positive developmental track for our wines. It's truly a mixture of that combined with the research, experimentation and experience year by year of the growers and producers in this

state. It's learning more about one's soils, working with various varieties to observe and learn the good and the not-so-good, adjusting crop loads, approaches to leaf canopy management, better harvest timing decisions, improved fruit handling and fermentation techniques...the list can go on and on.

The growing and making of wine is not a static process in any way. Methods and approaches to developing and producing wines are reconsidered and tweaked constantly as a reaction to items mentioned and as a result of year-by-year experiences.

It would be easy to go on *ad nauseam* about the many intricacies involved in the attempt to improve the growing and making of wines here in North Carolina (and across the rest of the globe as well), but that's better done in a relaxed setting with plenty of time and plenty of wine to augment the conversation.

But for now I'll just leave it at this: as good as so many of our state's wines are already, you can and you should expect that the quality is going to get better and better as we go along. So I encourage you to not miss out...enjoy it now, and look forward to enjoying it later. Stay connected with the wide variety of wines available and regularly being released. This is a ride you don't want to miss.

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OTV'S Q&A...

By Norm Oches,
Vineyard Specialist



Why aren't our wines being marketed more?

By Norm Oches

If you have any questions about the North Carolina wine industry, or about winemaking, grape growing or wine marketing in general, email them to the attention of Norm Oches at onthevine@yadkinvalley.com.

QUESTION: We don't see a lot of marketing of North Carolina wines. Shouldn't there be more?

— S.C.E., Mooresville, N.C.

Background: The simple answer is yes, there should be more marketing. The question is, who is going to pay for it? North Carolina is a brand new wine-producing state. Most of our wineries are already tapped out after the costs of getting their vineyards in the ground, their buildings up, and their processing equipment in. Ads, just one marketing tool, can be prohibitively expensive. Even a small ad in general interest magazines like *Our State North Carolina* can cost \$800 or more. And marketing wine through general interest magazines is an expensive way to focus on what is a narrowly defined market.

Current Status: "Most of the wineries in North Carolina," says Lenna Hobson, co-owner of RagApple Lassie Vineyards, "are doing all they can do with the limited marketing resources they have." Outside of assistance from the Department of Tourism and the North Carolina Wine & Grape Council, she says, most winery promotion is done at the grassroots level. Most of a winery's marketing dollars go into festivals and other direct-to-consumer events. And although these events can be very expensive for the individual winery, the target audience has a very real interest in learning more about North Carolina wines.

Word of mouth is still the most effective marketing tool, according to Hobson, and it begins at the winery. Wholesale distribution is also a form of marketing, and although wholesalers take as much as a 50% discount off the list price, they do get the wine label out on store shelves and in front of the buying public, thereby attracting a broader market.

"Aside from more financial support from the state when purchasing winery highway signs," says Hobson, "I would like to see the state do more to support wineries by educating businesses within the state about the importance of industry to the overall image of the state at home and abroad. Many people still do not know that North Carolina makes wine." Her sentiment is

echoed by Margo Knight, director of the North Carolina Wine & Grape Council.

The Council has a budget of \$500,000 to market all of North Carolina's wineries and vineyards. These funds come from the excise taxes consumers pay each time they buy a bottle of wine in North Carolina.

Let's put that figure into perspective. First, you know those handy guides to NC Wineries you find at places like the DOT rest areas coming in and going out of the state? Those cost the Council \$200,000 annually to produce, print and distribute. That leaves \$300,000 to market the state's wineries and vineyards. Let's compare: in 2004, Gallo spent \$10 million on marketing Turning Leaf wines, just one of a portfolio of more than 30 major wine brands. In 2006, the U.S. ad budget alone for Australia's Yellow Tail brand was \$24 million. You get the picture? Think Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation versus the receipts from your local church's last bake sale.

According to Knight, her department (actually, she is the department!) does a number of things in support of the industry. Aside from the winery guides, the state finances a billboard program to let tourists coming into the state know that North Carolina is a WINE STATE. She places ads in Southern Living and US Airway's in-flight magazine and does a lot of PR and media relations work to get stories about our growing industry into local and national media.

"Actually," says Knight, "the biggest help comes from the state's bigger wineries, like Biltmore, Shelton and Childress. Their own promotional efforts get the state's name in front of

the consumer more often than we can at the state level."

The Future: It costs a lot of money to support a new industry. Is it worth the many dollars it costs here in North Carolina? Well, considering that the U.S. is projected to become the world's leading consumer of wine by 2008 (according to International Wine and Spirits Record), it might be worthwhile for the state to step up to the plate with some more support. If not, the Yellow Tails of this world could become the wine of choice in North Carolina.

Knight is encouraged by the interest the Division of Tourism is taking in our state's growing wine industry. It just completed a \$20,000 economic impact study that should help determine the best way to market the industry not only to the buying public, but to business leaders and legislators around the state. "There is a natural connection," say both Hobson and Knight, "between tourism and the wine industry." It's through tourism and support of "local businesses" that we in North Carolina can fend off some of the competitive pressure from outside the state (and the country's) borders, until we build up our own local industry to meet the demands of a very competitive wine world.



Norm Oches designs and builds vineyards in North Carolina.

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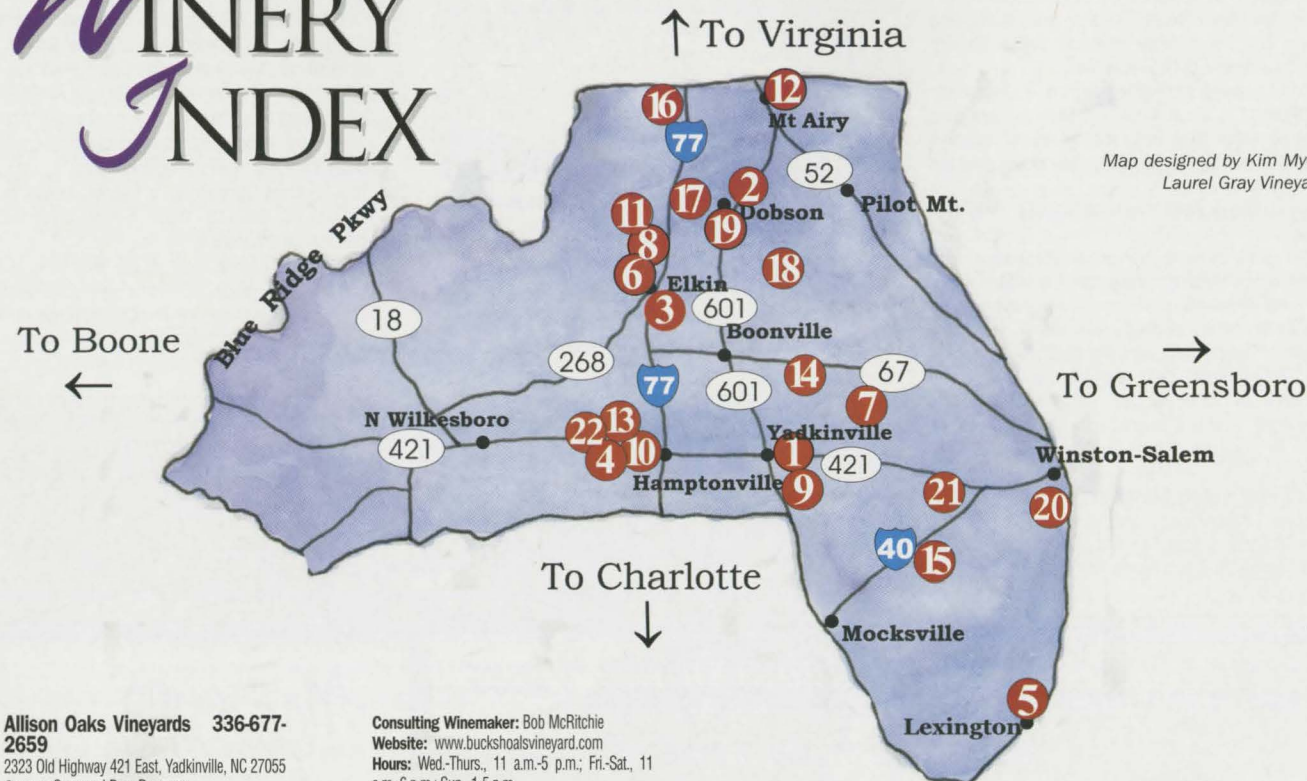
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Yadkin Valley

APPELLATION

WINERY INDEX



Map designed by Kim Myers,
Laurel Gray Vineyards

1 Allison Oaks Vineyards 336-677-2659

2323 Old Highway 421 East, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Owner: Gene and Pam Renegar
Winemaker: Mark Terry/Westbend
Website: www.allisonoaksvineyards.com
Hours: tasting room opening next spring.
Location: Yadkin County — 1 mile east of Yadkinville.
Wine List: Orchard White and Proprietor's Blend red.

2 Black Wolf Vineyards 336-374-2532

283 Vineyard Lane, Dobson, NC 27017
Owner: Dana Theis
Winemaker: Joyce Rigby
Website: www.blackwolfvineyards.com
Hours: M-Sat, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m.; Thurs-Sat, 5-10 p.m.; Sun, 12-8 p.m.
Location: Dobson in Surry County — Off U.S. 601 at Vineyard Lane.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Seyval Blanc, Chambourcin, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, red and white blends.

3 Brushy Mountain Winery 336-835-1313

125 W. Main St., Elkin, NC 28621
Owners: Matthew and Ann Mayberry and family.
Winemaker: Sean McRitchie
Hours: Thurs.-Fri., noon-6 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 1-5 p.m. or by appt.
Location: Surry County — Downtown Elkin, 1/2 block west of Bridge Street.
Wine List: French varietals, Blackberry, Raspberry.

4 Buck Shoals Vineyards 336-468-9274

6137 Vintner Way, Hamptonville, NC 27020
Owners: Terry and Joanne Crater
Winemaker: Dana Acker

5 Childress Vineyards 336-236-9463

1000 Childress Vineyards Road, Lexington, NC 27295
Consulting Winemaker: Bob McRitchie
Website: www.buckshoalsvineyard.com
Hours: Wed.-Thurs., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Yadkin County — Exit 267 off U.S. 421 and follow the signs 2.6 miles on Windsor Road; vineyard and winery on right.
Wine List: Rocco Red, Bryan's Legacy, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, Vito's Pride, Shoals Creek Red, Viognier.

5 Childress Vineyards 336-236-9463

1000 Childress Vineyards Road, Lexington, NC 27295
Owners: Richard Childress and Greg Johns
Winemaker: Mark Friszolowski
Website: www.childressvineyards.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., noon-6 p.m.
Location: Davidson County — off US 64 just west of intersection with US 52.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Viognier, Pinot Gris, Pinnacle, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Sangiovese, Merlot, Classic Red, White and Blush, Serendipity White and Red (muscadine), Port and Sweet Last Harvest Dessert wines, Reserve and Signature Reserves.

6 Elkin Creek Vineyard 336-526-5119

318 Elkin Creek Mill Road, Elkin, NC 28621
Owner and Winemaker: Mark Greene
Website: www.elkincreekvineyard.com
Hours (The Kitchen at Elkin Creek): Thurs.-Sat., 11 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
Vineyard: Open daily, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
Location: Wilkes County — West off I-77 at Exit 85.2 mi. to N. Bridge St.; right 3/4 mi.; left on Carter Mill Road for 1.5 mi.; left on Elkin Mill Road.
Wine list: Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, Barbera, Rossa, Sangiovese, Dessert Wine.

7 Flint Hill Vineyards 336-699-4455

2133 Flint Hill Road, East Bend, NC 27018
Owners: Brenda and Tim Doub
Winemaker: Sean McRitchie
Website: www.flinthillvineyards.com
Hours: Fri., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat., noon-5 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Yadkin County — Off US 421 at Baltimore Road exit to Old 421. Turn right. Then left on Flint Hill Road. Vineyard 2 mi. on left.
Wine list: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Chardonnay, Viognier, Olde Yattken, Crushed Velvet.

8 Grassy Creek Vineyard 336-835-4230

235 Chatham Cottage Circle, Elkin, NC 28621
Owners: Derrill and Lori Rice, Jim and Cynthia Douthitt
Winemaker: Jim Douthitt
Website: www.grassycreekvineyard.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sat, 12-6 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.; or by appt.
Location: Surry/Wilkes Counties — West off I-77 at Exit 85 to US 21-Bypass North. left after first traffic light onto Klondike Road. Left into vineyard after about 1/2 mi.
Wine list: Chardonnay, Merlot, Guernsey Red (sweet), Red Barn Blend.

9 Hanover Park Vineyard 336-463-2875

1927 Courtney-Huntsville Rd., Yadkinville, NC

27055
Owners: Michael and Amy Helton
Winemaker: Michael Helton
Website: www.hanoverparkwines.com
Hours: Thurs.-Sat, 12-6 p.m.; Sun, 1-5 p.m.
Location: Yadkin County — Take U.S. 421 to U.S. 601. Go south 4 miles. Left on Courtney-Huntsville Rd.
Wine list: Chardonnay, Viognier, Rosé, Chambourcin, Mourvedre, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Early Twilight, Michael's Blend.

10 Laurel Gray Vineyards 336-607-4455

5726 Old Hwy 421, Hamptonville, NC 27020
Owners: Kim and Benny Myers
Website: www.laurelgray.com
Hours: Wed, 1-6; Thurs-Fri, 10-6; Sat, 10-5; Sun, 1-5
Location: Yadkin County, Hwy 421 North to Exit 267, (1.5 miles north of I-77) Exit right onto Windsor Rd., go .1 mile to Old Hwy 421 turn right, Vineyard is .1 mile ahead on left.
Wine List: Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Scarlet Mountain (off-dry red), Syrah, 1773 sweet pink blend, Viognier.

11 McRitchie Wine Company 336-874-3003

315 Thurmond PO Road, Thurmond, NC 28683
Owners: Sean and Patricia McRitchie
Winemaker: Sean McRitchie
Website: www.mcritchiwine.com
Hours: By appt. Call ahead.
Location: Wilkes County — From I-77, Take Exit 83

or Exit 85 to US 21 north toward Sparta. After 8 miles, turn right on Thurmond PO Road (not Thurmond Road). Vineyard 1/8 mi. on left.
Wine List: French varietals and blends.

12 Old North State Winery 336-789-9463

308 North Main Street, Mount Airy, NC 27030
Owners: Mike Thomas, Ben Webb, Tom Webb
Website: www.oldnorthstatewinery.com
Hours: Mon-Sat, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; Sun, 1-6
Location: Surry County — From I-77, take I-74 East to US 601 into Mt. Airy. Follow signs for Visitor Center. Winery is on left past the Visitor Center on Main Street.
Wine List: Cabernet Franc Reserve, Chardonnay, Spring House White, Starlight White, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Prelude, Autumn Leaf Red, Autumn Leaf Rosé, Autumn Leaf Gold, Sandy Cross Muscadine, Afternoon Delight Red Muscadine, Restless Souls Red Blend.

13 Raffaldini Vineyards 336-835-9463

450 Groce Road, Ronda, NC 28670
Owners: The Raffaldini Family
Partner and General Manager: Stephen Lyons
Winemaker: Stephen Rigby
Website: www.raffaldini.com
Hours: Wed.-Sat, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Wilkes County — Take I-40 West through Winston-Salem. Bear right on US Hwy. 421 North towards Yadkinville. Proceed on Hwy. 421 N for approximately 31 miles to Exit 267, Windsor Rd. Turn right on Windsor. Follow signs. Go left on Old Hwy. 421 for 1.4 miles. Go right on Swan Creek Rd. for 2.6 miles. Go left on Clingman Rd. for 1 mile. Go left on Groce Rd.
Wine List: Bella Misto, Rosso, Sangiovese, Rosato, Chiara, Vermentino, Montepulciano, Fiori.

14 RagApple Lassic Vineyards 866-RAG-APPLE

3724 RagApple Lassic Lane, Boonville, NC 27011
Owners: Frank and Lenna Hobson
Winemaker: Linda M. King
Website: www.ragapplelassie.com
Hours: daily, noon-6 p.m.
Location: Yadkin County — 3 miles east of Boonville off NC 67.
Wine List: Pinot Gris, Viognier, Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Red Zinfandel, Rockford red, Boonville Blanc.

15 RayLen Vineyards 336-998-3100

3577 US Hwy 158, Mocksville, NC 27028
Owners: Joe & Joyce Neely
Winemaker: Steve Shepard
Website: www.raylenvineyards.com
Hours: Mon-Sat, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Location: Davie County — Via I-40 West, Exit 180, left on NC 801 S, right on 158 West; winery is 4 mi. on right.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Viognier, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Shiraz, Carolinuis, Category 5 Cabernet Blend.

16 Round Peak Vineyards 336-352-5595

765 Round Peak Church Rd., Mount Airy, NC 27030
Owners: Susan & George Little, Janet & Lee Martin
Vineyard Manager: Josh McKeown
Winemaker: Sean McRitchie
Website: www.roundpeak.com
Hours: Mon., Thurs.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun., noon-5 p.m. or by appt.
Location: Surry County — I-77 to Exit 100. Left on NC89 toward Low Gap. Right on Round Peak Church Rd. for 1.4 mi. Vineyard is on left.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Merlot, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Nebbiolo, Fiddler's Red and Sweet Niagara

17 Shelton Vineyards 336-366-4724

286 Cabernet Lane, Dobson, NC 27017
Owners: Charles M. Shelton and R. Edwin Shelton
Winemaker: Murphy Moore
Website: www.sheltonvineyards.com
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun., 1-5 p.m.
Location: Surry County — I-77 to Exit 93 Dobson. Turn right, then take first right onto Twin Oaks Rd. Go 2.5 miles to the Shelton Vineyards entrance on the right.
Wine List: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Pinot Noir, Port, Madison Lee Red and White, Salem Fork Blush.

18 Stony Knoll Vineyards 336-374-5752

1143 Stony Knoll Road, Dobson, NC 27017
Owners: Van and Kathy Coe
Winemaker: Lynn Crouse
Website: stonyknollvineyards.com
Hours: Sat., noon-6 p.m.; Sun., 2-6 p.m.; or by appt.
Location: Surry County — From the south, go 7 miles north on Rockford Road from NC 67, then left on Stony Knoll Road; from the north, take U.S. 601 to Rockford Road, go south 7 miles and turn right on Stony Knoll Road.
Wine List: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Syrah.

19 Surry Community College Winery 336-386-3408

Surry County — I-77 to Exit 93 (Dobson); Turn right and follow Zephyr Road into Dobson. Turn right at courthouse and SCC is 1/2 mile on right. Tours by appointment.

20 Weathervane Winery 336-775-9717

484 Hartman Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127
Owner: Sid Proctor
Hours: Call for appt.
Website: www.weathervanewinery.com
Location: Davidson County — From U.S. 52 south of Winston-Salem, west on Hickory Tree Rd. for .2 mi., then left .2 mi. on Hartman Rd.
Wine List: Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Pinot Grigio, Merlot, Stratosphere, Grand Vieux Chateau du Roi, Temperature Rising, Rooster Red, Rooster Black, Sweet Mountain Blush, Strawberry Breeze, Tropical Wave.

21 Westbend Vineyards 336-945-5032

5394 Williams Rd., Lewisville, NC 27023
Owner: Lillian Kroustalis
Winemaker: Mark Terry
Website: www.westbendvineyards.com
Hours: Tues-Sat, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun, noon-5 p.m.
Location: Forsyth County — Go 15 miles west of Winston-Salem on Highway 421. Take Shallowford Rd., Exit 246, and turn left. Go 2 mi., turn left onto Williams Rd.
Wine List: Chardonnay, Riesling, Viognier, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chambourcin, Yadkin Fumé, Vintner's Signature Carolina Series blends, Pioneer Series blends.

22 Windy Gap Vineyards 336-984-3926

656 Pardue Farm Rd., Ronda, NC 28670
Owners: Allen and Sandra Hinchner
Winemaker: Allen Hinchner
Website: www.windygapvine.com
Hours: Tues.-Sat, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun, noon-5 p.m.; Mon. by appt.
Location: Wilkes County — From US 421, Exit 272 (Clingman Road). Go north on Clingman Rd. After approx. 1/2 mile, turn left onto Pardue Farm Rd. Go 1/4 mile and turn left again on Pardue Farm Rd. Go .3 mile and turn right onto paved driveway. Winery is at end of driveway.
Wine List: Viognier, Chardonnay, Chambourcin, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, TONY Red, Three Dawg Nite, Frog Level Fling Blush, Sweet Fat Basset, Blueberry, Blackberry.

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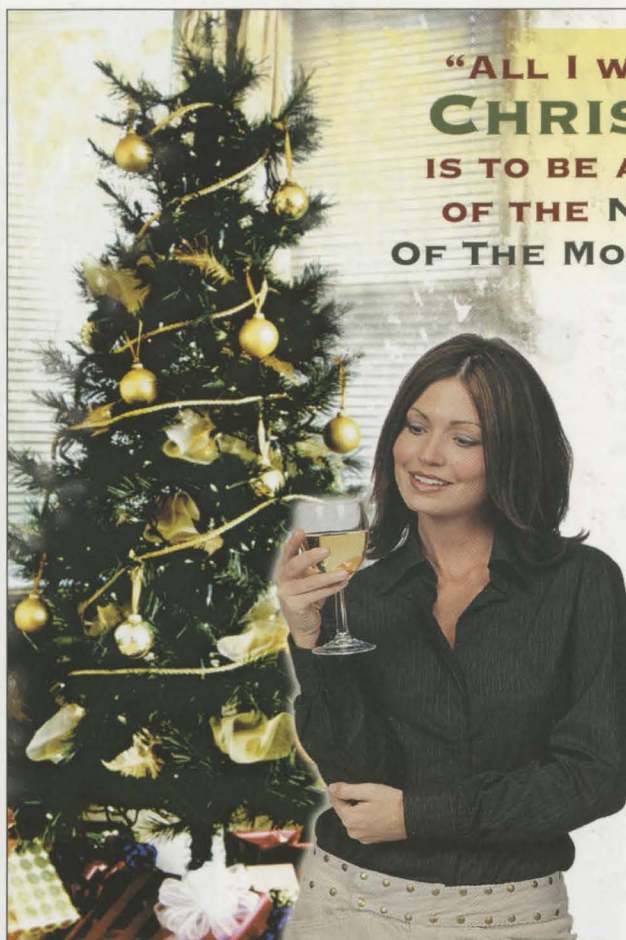
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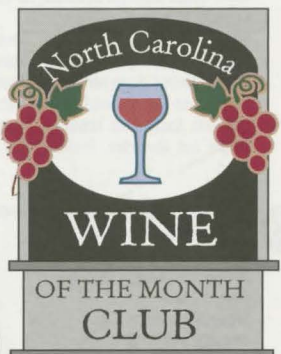
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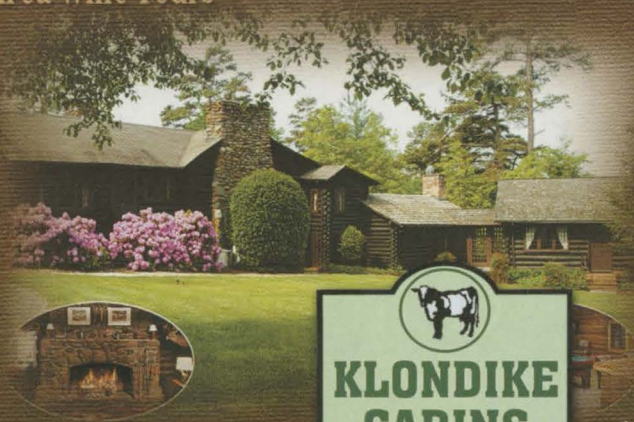
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