



Virginia Wines

Wine making in Virginia is said to date back to the early 1600's in Jamestown. The first Assembly actually passed Act 12 requiring all settlers to grow grapes to make wine. Thomas Jefferson actually failed at his attempt to grow pure European grapes but his efforts forged the way for others that succeeded using hardier hybrid grapes. The beginning #1 of the Virginia Wine Industry. The Norton grape was given credit for being the first to win acclaim in 1880 at a Paris Exposition.

Prohibition then put an end to the budding winemaking industry. Only a few California wineries were successful in selling grapes to home winemakers and religious groups. No such vineyards are known to have survived in Virginia.

In the 1960's it is believed there was less than 15 acres of grapes being grown in the state. The re-found popularity of American wines in the 70's, welcomed the "2nd" beginning of Virginia's winemaking industry. Wineries began to appear near Middleburg, Virginia with Meredyth and Piedmont being credited among the first. In 1979 Virginia had just 6 registered vineyards. In the decades since, the Virginia wine landscape has grown with thousands of acres of grapes with new vineyards being opened regularly. In the beginning of 2005, the state hosted 92 registered vineyards.

Viticulture (wine grape growing) stretches from the Roanoke Valley to the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Many central Virginia Colleges now offer courses on an array of topics spanning growing, blending, bottling and caring for this rapidly expanding liquid industry.

Critical to this brisk growth was the enactment of the Virginia Farm Wineries Law in 1980. This law created the positions of State Enologist and State Viticulturist at Virginia Tech. These departments provided invaluable advice and technical know-how.

One final, yet critical element to this growth was constancy. The long-term commitment of a few provided the dependability needed to create loyalty of

retailers and consumers alike. Among the early is the Zonin Family, Italy's largest private wine producer who started Barboursville Vineyards in 1976. Mr. Jean Le Ducq with ties to both the French and California wine industries created one of the states largest winemakers, Prince Michel in 1983. Oakencroft Vineyard and Winery owner, Felicia Warburg Rogan is known as one of the industries "Tireless promoters" of the Virginia wine industry. Virginia has become a nationally recognized, respected wine producer evidenced by the numerous awards and medals garnered in nationally conducted competitions and tasting. As the knowledge of matching grapes with certain soils and microclimates grows, so does the quality of many locally produced wines. Locals and visitors alike can "taste" this industries growth and move to mature (which only produces even *better* wine!).

Virginia now ranks within the top states in the nation with fine wine production.

* Information taken from historical reporting found on the Internet, story written for Landmarks by William Curtis , Oakencroft Vineyard and Pearmund.