

GROWING DIVERSITY

OHIO WINE CONNOISSEURS KNOW THAT THERE'S A TREMENDOUS DIVERSITY ACROSS THE STATE — FROM WINES WITH A RANGE OF FLAVORS, TO WINERIES IN ALL SIZES AND STYLES, AND PRODUCERS AND MAKERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

BY RICH WARREN

PICTURED AND ABOVE RIGHT: Jennifer Boyle spends countless hours working in the vineyard and making the wine before she's able to savor the final bottles with patrons at Vinberige Vineyards.



Vinberige Vineyards

JENNIFER BOYLE

Jennifer Boyle wears many hats at Vinberige Vineyards in rural Perry County, set in a charming brick farmhouse built around 1830 with fireplaces, exposed brick and a winding staircase inside and rambling decks outdoors. She's operations manager and vineyard manager, but also the winemaker and event manager. She uses grapes from her own six-acre vineyard as well as those obtained primarily from Ohio partner vineyards to make a variety of both sweet and dry wines. Her "minimalist" philosophy to winemaking calls for her to "stand back and let the wine be what it wants to be," she says. Boyle has transitioned to the business from the cutthroat fashion retail industry and was shocked to find how supportive and helpful everyone in the Ohio wine industry has been, especially Robin Coolidge at Wyandotte Winery in Columbus and Ed Trebets from Urban Vintner in Willoughby, whom Boyle regards as her mentors. "There's so much camaraderie and collaboration in our industry in Ohio, and there's a culture allowing both men and women to succeed," she says. "The consensus among everyone is 'We want to help you be successful, because if you are, it helps Ohio wines to also be a success.'"

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Sip MEET THE MAKER



PICTURED AND ABOVE: Starting Yellow Butterfly Winery and producing several varieties of wine marked a dramatic career shift for owner Michael White.



Yellow Butterfly Winery MICHAEL WHITE

It's impossible to miss Yellow Butterfly Winery in Tuscarawas County. It's located in a vibrantly yellow barn overlooking a stunning rural landscape of hills and meadows filled with grazing alpacas. Its owner and winemaker, Michael White, opened the winery in 2009, making a surprising career transition from his former job as the mayor of Cleveland. He and his wife originally purchased the adjacent property to start a farm and fell in love with the bucolic setting — “a little piece of heaven,” as White calls it — and later purchased the 33 acres that is now home to Yellow Butterfly. White offers his guests a range of sweet, semi-sweet and dry wines and takes special delight in watching his wine pass into the hands of a thirsty customer. “I love it when they give me a ‘Yum,’” he laughs. White does find parallels in his current vocation to the rough and tumble world of Cleveland politics. “Whether it’s running a winery or being in public office, it’s all about customer service,” he says, “But in the case of a winery, people vote with their feet and their wallets.”

Laurentia Vineyard & Winery

CANDACE DIGIROLAMO



MICHAEL WHITE: WILLIAM SCHERTZ. CANDACE DIGIROLAMO: CANDACE DIGIROLAMO

Laurentia Vineyard & Winery in Madison in the Grand River Valley is renowned for its all-estate produced cabernet sauvignons, pinot noirs, chardonnays and rieslings. As vineyard and operations manager at Laurentia, Candace DiGirolamo responds to whatever challenges Mother Nature throws her way while tending to the European-style vinifera grapes grown in the winery's 45-acres of vineyards. She's also in constant communication with the winemaker. She can adjust harvest dates, for example, should the winemaker want to keep the acid content of a grape at a particular level. She's noticed the ratio of women to men attending the annual Ohio Grape and Wine Conference increases each year. “The whole winemaking community in Ohio is welcoming and supportive no matter your gender or background,” she says. “Everyone wants all of us to produce great wine.”

LEFT: Candace DiGirolamo helps bring in the harvest of grapes at Laurentia Vineyard & Winery. FAR LEFT: Take in the scenery from Laurentia's balcony.

Merry Family Winery



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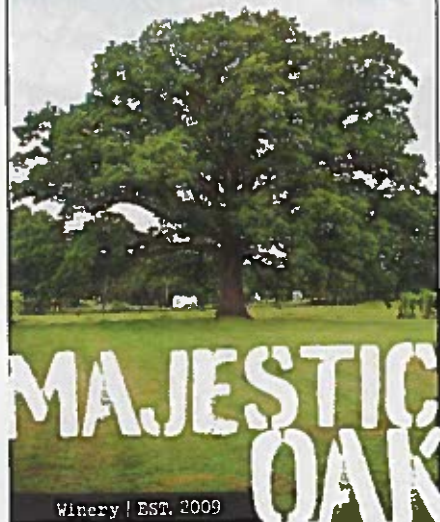


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Sip MEET THE MAKER

Camelot Cellars RENARD GREEN

Renard Green, who took over ownership of Camelot Cellars in Columbus in March of 2020, calls his property an "urban winery." With no vineyards of its own, Camelot instead makes wines on site from juices obtained from vineyards around the world, from Argentina to Australia. Guests can even learn how to make wine themselves under the supervision of Camelot's winemaker, J.P. Rousseau. Wine also makes its way into the Southern and Creole dishes available in Camelot's fully functioning restaurant, right down to the desserts. "Sometimes we even mix wine into the cocktails we serve," Green laughs. Green is pleased Camelot Cellars is located in Columbus' diverse Olde Town East neighborhood. "I want us to be a place that's inclusive of all backgrounds and cultures," he says. "At Camelot, people can celebrate that diversity together."



PICTURED: Owner Renard Green visits with guests at Camelot Cellars, a popular spot in Columbus' Olde Town East neighborhood.

Gervasi Vineyards

SCOTT SWALDO & JEFF HICKS

Gervasi Vineyards offers a wide range of experiences to visitors at its gorgeous property in Canton. On site, there are three separate restaurants offering a diversity of cuisine, a combination coffee house and distillery, and even luxurious overnight accommodations, many of them overlooking a lake. Gervasi's CEO and General Manager Scott Swaldo, a member of the family who co-owns the facility, describes Gervasi as "a destination winery resort offering a Tuscan-style escape in Ohio." As Jeff Hicks, Gervasi's brand manager and Swaldo's husband, puts it: "We want to extend the same warm feeling that our own family experiences when we sit together around a table. Nothing makes us happier than to see our guests sharing laughter and our wine with people they love."

RIGHT: Married couple Jeff Hicks (left) and Scott Swaldo also team together to help lead Gervasi Vineyards.

REWARD GREEN, MEGAN LEE BERNARD, JEFF HICKS AND SCOTT SWALDO: SABRINA HALL PHOTOGRAPHY



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