



by Alexandra Edwards

For centuries, wine has been as an important addition to a great feast as meat, fish or poultry. The drinking of wine is depicted in many historical art masterpieces and is also mentioned in the Holy Bible. Grape varieties from all around the world have been used to produce some wonderful fine wines, all with their own unique taste.

For many, sipping a glass of good wine is an experience rather than a drink. The taste of the grape, the aroma, the color of the wine is what is taken into consideration when tasting wine. When drinking wine with a meal, selecting the right wine to complement the food can make dining even more enjoyable.

Though world famous for its fine whiskies, Tennessee has been making award winning wines as far back as the late 1800's. During that time, grape growing was said to be one of Tennessee's most important cash crops and vineyards flourished until prohibition came into law in 1919. However, independent Tennesseans continued making muscadine, blackberry and various other wines for themselves and friends and by the 1980's Tennessee wineries had started to make a comeback.

Wine appreciation has continued to grow rapidly in the South as Tennessee vineyards and wineries are introducing more and wine varieties.

Today, Tennessee has over 29 wineries in operation and several are receiving national and international awards for their fine wines. The Tennessee Viticulture and Oenological Society (TVOS) and the Tennessee Farm Wine-growers Association (TFWA) were formed to work together to coordinate and advance the efforts

of all Tennessee grape interests, including promotion, information, and legislation. In 1985 the state legislature passed a bill to create the Viticulture Advisory Board (VAB), a nine member board appointed by the Governor to advise and report on the potential and proper direction for the growth of the Tennessee grape and wine industry. TVOS and TFWA each have a representative on this important board. Each year the TFWA and the University of Tennessee sponsor an annual wine competition

out on the porch watching the sunset. Red wine, when taken in moderation, has been proven by medical scientists to also have positive health benefits. Many doctors now agree that wine can minimize stress and lower cholesterol levels, but with a strong emphasis on "in moderation" meaning 1-2 small wine glasses.

Allow me to take you on a tour of a few of this region's good wineries. The oldest being Morris Vineyard and Winery located in the rolling hills of Charleston, TN. Owner

479-7311 or visit www.morrisvineyard.com.

Relatively new to the Cleveland area is the Ocoee Winery, located at 5365 Waterlevel Highway, State Route 64.

Owner Steve Hunt has recently added a large deck to the front of the winery where visitors can absorb the wonderful view of the majestic Big Frog Mountain. The winery includes a tasting room and gift shop. Grapes and fruits are bought from local vineyards and the wine is fermented, bottled and sold at the winery.

Hunt said that he started making wine at home as a hobby but after

receiving great compliments from friends and family, decided to open his own winery. The winery offers a variety of red and white table wines which include Ocoee Red, Blackberry, White Muscadine, Niagara, Catawba, Red Muscadine, Merlot and Cynthiana. Fruit wines include Apple, Blueberry, Strawberry and Peach. In the Ocoee Winery gift shop, Martha's Cupboard you can find some of wine's best accompaniments; cheeses, meats and crackers. For more information call 423-614-5100 or visit www.ocoeewinery.com

Just outside of Polk County alongside the mountains on Highway 411 in Delano, TN sits Savannah Oaks Winery, located just across from the beautiful Hiwassee river on Delano Road. Set in an old Cantilever Barn built in 1861, the winery's tasting room and gift shop adds rustic charm. The owner, Betty Davis said "I wanted to create a place with a classic Southern atmosphere that would also have a homey feel that would allow people to relax and enjoy their time here." The winery's 11,000 acres which include a thriving vineyard makes a beautiful setting for weddings and special events. Savannah Oaks

Tennessee Wines



titled "Wines of the South" where wineries from Tennessee along with thirteen other Southern states are invited to participate.

To many, the tasting of wine is an enjoyable pastime or hobby. A good wine can be likened to the appreciation of a piece of art. Wine lovers do not consider wine an alcoholic beverage, but as being in a class of its own. A simple glass of wine can accentuate the pleasure of relaxation when sitting in your favorite chair, in the tub, or

Carolyn Morris said, "For 44 years the Morris family have been producing some of the best muscadines in the South." Morris is one of the few vineyards that still invite the public during July and August to pick-your-own muscadines and blueberries. Their new winery was re-opened a year ago and produces several local wines which include; Niagara, Catawba, Muscadine Blush, Scuppernong, Mountain Rose, Blueberry, and White Riesling. For more information call 423-



Wine list include some interesting local names like; Hiwassee Red Huzzy, Ocoee Gold Sunset, Etowah Derailer and Savannah Red, as well as Moonlight Merlot, Royal Reserve, Baco Noir, White Muscadine, Red Muscadine, Catawba, Niagara. Their fruit wines include; Peach, Blackberry, Blueberry, Strawberry, Cherry and Razzle Dazzle. For more information call (423) 263-2762 or visit their website www.Savannah-Oaks-Winery.com

Just a little further afield in Athens, TN is Striker's Premium Winery owned by Stanley Striker and Shannon Miller.

Striker's Premium Winery and Tasting Room located at 480 County Road 172, Athens, TN offer a variety of sweet, semi-sweet, and dry wines. The winery which has been in operation for over 20 years, is nestled among the scenic views of McMinn County and enhanced by a flowing stream. Strikers wine list includes; Athenian Red, Baco Noir, Seyval Blanc, Ravat 51, Catawba, Niagara, Scup-

pernong, Cherry and Blueberry. For more information call (423) 507-8816.

For those who wish to try wine for the first time, it is recommended you start with a semi-sweet grape variety. Once you have acquired the taste, experiment with a sweeter or drier wine to suit your own personal preference.

Wine tasting is simple and just as it implies, a small amount of wine 1-2 mouthfuls is poured into a small glass or cup, just like when you taste a new ice cream flavor. Unlike the wine tasting done by professional wine connoisseurs, you do not have to swirl it around your mouth, stick your nose in the glass to inhale its bouquet then spit it out. That is unless you really want to of course, but out of courtesy, I suggest you let the winery staff know in advance.

A toast to your health - "Cheers."