

Swirl, Sip, Snark

The Best & Worst of Virginia Wine



Six New Yorkers Walk Into an Aviary, Hundreds of Tweets Ensur

Posted by [VAWineDiva](#) on September 26, 2011

When I think riesling, I think of the [Finger Lakes Wine Country](#) in NY. This is because the Finger Lakes seems to have the right climate for this grape and because the [Finger Lakes Wine Alliance](#) has done a great job of getting this information out to wine lovers like me. That said, these wines are hard to find in Virginia, and to the best of my knowledge, we've only had Finger Lakes rieslings 4 times. One was for a [twitter tasting last summer](#), the second was when we had a [second bottle](#) of riesling we received at the same time as the bottles for that twitter tasting, the third was when we (or really just me, I think) had a sample of a wine during a session at the Wine Bloggers Conference in Charlottesville, and the fourth was on Thursday night when we participated in a twitter tasting to celebrate the ~~release~~ of the 2010 rieslings from 30 Finger Lakes wineries. This should make clear that we are, by no means, experts about these wines, but we are very interested consumers.



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Our Goal

We're a couple who love wine and wine tasting, but we're not wine professionals. Given this, our experiences wine tasting throughout Virginia are the same as any other couple who shows up at a vineyard. This blog is a fun way for us to reflect on our experiences with VA wines. At the same time, it's also a way for us to help people planning a visit to one or more Virginia wineries know what they can expect as average people off the street looking to learn a bit about wine.

Check out our "Who We Are" page for a bit more

So, what was the event? Well, during the Wine Bloggers Conference, I noticed some tweets from Finger Lakes wine folks asking for bloggers who would be interesting in participating in a twitter-based launch event to sign up to potentially receive some sample bottles. As a big advocate for drinking from the other 47 (the states other than CA, OR, and WA), I added us to the list. Apparently we made the cut, because a box of 6 wines showed up on our doorstep, so we prepared to taste and tweet.



This event was a bit different than your typical twitter tasting. Normally, all participants drink the same wines with 1 or more moderators keeping time and facilitating conversations. This time, wines from 30 wineries were involved, so everyone had different wines. This meant that everyone was tasting and tweeting at their own pace and people weren't necessarily talking about the same wines at the same time. This made it a bit of a chaotic event, but it also made for some interesting discussion as we were able to chat with each other about wines that we weren't able to taste ourselves but that sparked our curiosity. I wish a few more folks from the wineries were tweeting along with us and available to answer questions live, but it was a very ambitious event, and it seemed to work out rather well to me.

[I do want to note that while this was billed as a launch event for 2010 rieslings, many wineries have been selling this vintage for weeks/months, but it was still a great joint effort that likely raised a lot of interest, at least among the twitterati.]

Given our hectic schedules on Thursday, we opted for Thai takeout to eat as we tasted, so we ended up with an array of foods to try pairing with the wines: some fried appetizers, chicken satay, and red curry. Trying the different pairings added a fun element to the event for us. Now, on to the wines (all 2010, of course!)



Wine 1 was the [Hunt Country Vineyards](#) dry riesling (\$14). This wine had .4% residual sugar, so it was the driest of our samples. It offered a floral green apple news that made me wish we had some shellfish. I swear that

information on us and our philosophy.

Feel free to email us at [guiltyparties \[at\] swirlsipsnark \[dot\] com](mailto:guiltyparties@swirlsipsnark.com).

Categories

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- Albemarle Cider Works
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- AmRhein's Wine Cellars
- Ankida Ridge Vineyards
- Anfield Vineyards
- Appellation Trail
- Artisanal Wineries of Rappahannock County
- Aspen Dale Winery at the Barn
- Athena Vineyards
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- Barrel Oak Winery
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- Castle Hill Cider
- Cave Ridge Vineyards
- Century Club
- Chateau O'Brien
- Chatham Vineyards
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- Dr. Vino
- Drink Local Wine
- Drink What You Like

there was also a hint of salinity to this wine that only heightened my desire for fish, but I was mostly focused on the apple blossom and tart apple flavors. I found myself wishing for a bit more acidity, especially on the finish, but I still found it to be a really enjoyable wine that went especially well with the chicken skewers.



Number 2 was the [Fox Run Vineyards](#) dry riesling (\$16) with .9% residual sugar. I wasn't pleased to find a synthetic cork, but I was pleased by what I found beneath the closure. The nose was floral tangerine and just made me think riesling (not that I'm completely sure why since I don't drink much riesling). On the palate, I noted lemon and tangerine and found a good acid balance. After the tasting, and the next evening, this was the wine I reached for.



The [Lakewood Vineyards](#) dry riesling (\$13) was up next. This one had .98% residual sugar and a lightly sweet floral nose with a hint of something chemically. Given that the sugar in this wine was basically the same as that in the Fox Run, I was surprised by how much sweeter this wine seemed. I noted floral citrus notes, trending towards tangerine, but the wine wasn't particularly memorable and it just fell a bit flat for me. This wine just didn't interest me, and I never particularly wanted to go back for another taste, but when I did, I kept noting that chemical element which I eventually labeled as latex. something I do not want in a wine.



- Winery
- DeVault Family Vineyards
- Dog and Oyster: The Vineyards of the Hope and Glory Inn
- Doukenie Winery
- Drink Local Wine
- Drink Local Wine Conference
- Dry Mill Vineyards & Winery
- DuCard Vineyards
- Eastern Shore Wine Trail
- Education
- Fabbioli Cellars
- Fauquier County Wine Trail
- First Amendment Law
- First Colony Winery
- Flying Fox Vineyard
- Foggy Ridge Cider
- food and wine
- Foothills Scenic Wine Trail
- Fox Meadow Winery
- Gadino Cellars
- Garbrielle Rausse Winery
- General's Ridge Vineyard and Winery
- General's Wine and History Trail
- Get to Know Your Winemaker
- Glass House Winery
- Glen Manor Vineyards
- Good Luck Cellars
- Gray Ghost Vineyards
- Grayhaven Winery
- Guest Post
- Hartwood Winery
- Heart of Virginia Wine Trail
- Hickory Hill Vineyards and Winery
- Hidden Brook Winery
- Hiddencroft Vineyards
- Hill Top Berry Farm and Winery
- Hillsborough Vineyards
- holiday
- Holly Grove Vineyards
- Horton Vineyards
- Hume Vineyards
- Hunter's Run Wine Barn
- Ingleside Vineyards
- Jacey Vineyards
- James River Cellars
- Jefferson Vineyards
- Keswick Vineyards
- King Family Vineyards
- Kluge Estate Winery & Vineyard
- Lake Anna Winery
- LeoGrande Vineyard & Winery
- Lexington Valley Vineyard
- Linden Vineyards
- Little Washington Winery
- Lost Creek Winery & Vineyards
- Loudoun Valley Vineyards
- Loudoun Wine Trail
- Lovingston Winery
- East Coast Wineries
- Eric Asimov (New York Times)
- Fermentation
- Good Grape
- Hagarty on Wine
- Keswick Vineyards Blog
- Muppet Balloon Project
- Old Time Cider
- On Wine (Wall Street Journal)
- Palate Press
- Richard Leahy's Wine Report
- Serious About Wine
- Suburban Wino
- The Good Wine Guru
- The Other 46
- Vinography
- Vinotrip
- Virginia Wine In My Pocket
- Virginia Wine Know
- Virginia Wine Notebook
- Virginia Wine Time
- Wine About Virginia
- Wine Compass

Useful VA Wine Links

- Official VA Wine Website
- Artisanal Wineries of Rappahannock County
- Bedford Wine Trail
- Blue Ridge Wine Trail
- Blue Ridge Wine Way
- Chesapeake Bay Wine Trail
- DC's Wine Country
- Fauquier County Wine Trail
- Foothills Scenic Wine Trail
- General's Wine and History Trail
- Heart of Virginia Wine Trail
- Loudoun Wine Trail
- Monticello Wine Trail
- Mountain Road Wine Experience
- Shenandoah Valley Wine Trail
- Southern Virginia Wine Trail
- Tuskie's Wine Trail
- VA Wine Events
- Wine Trail of Botetourt County

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Fourth was the [Damiani Wine Cellars](#) semi-dry riesling (\$16) with 2% residual sugar. This wine had a stone fruit and tropical fruit nose that got me really interested to taste what was in my glass. It tasted less sweet than I expected given the residual sugar, and I noted a lot of pear along with some tropical fruit flavors. I wish there had been a hair more acid to this wine, but I still kept returning to it, and it was my favorite pairing for the curry we were eating. By night 2 the fruit had receded a bit and I was noting some petrol on the nose, and I found myself wondering how this wine would age.



The [Thirsty Owl Wine Company](#) riesling (\$13, according to [a retailer](#) who answered my query on twitter) with 2.1% residual sugar was our fifth bottle. I swirled and sniffed and immediately thought of candied pineapple since I noted pineapple and honey. It tasted less sweet than it smelled, and the pineapple flavors were joined by tangerine and nectarine. Based on the nose, I hadn't expected to like this wine much, but it surprised me and actually worked quite well with our fried appetizers (as did the Damiani). I still wanted a bit more acid, but I often do. By night two, I was noting more cantaloupe on the nose along with a hint of something vaguely chemically (sorry, I'm just not good at identifying those scents, apparently).



- Marterella Winery
- Maryland Wine
- Mattaponi Winery
- MD wine
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- Miscellaneous
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- Molon Lave Winery
- Monticello Wine Trail
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- Narmada Winery
- New Kent Winery
- North Gate Vineyards
- North Mountain Vineyards
- Notaviva Vineyards
- NY Wine
- Oak Crest Vineyard & Winery
- Old House Vineyards
- Opinions I Haz Them
- PA Wine
- Paradise Springs Winery
- Peaks of Otter Winery
- Pearmund Cellars
- Phillip Carter Winery
- Piedmont Vineyards
- Pippin Hill Farm and Vineyards
- Pollak Vineyards
- Potomac Point Vineyard and Winery
- Potter's Craft Cider
- Prince Michel Vineyard and Winery
- R Wines
- Rappahannock Cellars
- Rebec Vineyards
- Robert Lazaro
- Rockbridge Vineyard
- Rogers Ford Farm Winery
- Sharp Rock Vineyards
- Shenandoah Valley Wine Trail
- Shenandoah Vineyards
- Southern Virginia Wine Trail
- SOVA Wine Trail
- Stinson Vineyards
- Stone Mountain Vineyards
- Sugarleaf Vineyards
- Sunset Hills Vineyard
- Swedenburg Estate Vineyard
- Sweely Estate Winery
- Tarara Winery
- Taste of Culpeper
- The Hague Winery
- The Homeplace Vineyard
- Thibaut-Janisson Winery
- Three Fox Vineyards
- Tomahawk Mill Winery
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- Twin Oaks Tavern Winery
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Our final wine of the evening was the [Rooster Hill Vineyards](#) medium sweet riesling (\$15) with 2.5% residual sugar. This wine was my least favorite, it offered a flat floral/citrus nose and tasted of peach and a bend of lemons, limes, and oranges. The wine was just flat and unmemorable.

Overall, I had 3 wines I enjoyed a lot: the Fox Run, the Damiani, and the Hunt Country, in that order. I also had 3 that were not really doing it for me: the Thirsty Owl, the Lakewood, and the Rooster Hill, in that order. In general, I'd say that the drier wines showed better. Take that for what it's worth, however, since I also typically prefer drier wines, but I think it had more to do with these having a better acid/sugar balance in this case. I'd also say that I missed the crisp acidity found in the wines we tasted last year. I think this is a good example of vintage variation. 2010 was hot and dry, so the grapes likely got pretty darn ripe which means more sugar and less acid. Regardless, it's once again piqued my interest in NY wines, and I hope we get to try more soon. At a minimum, this has got me thinking about which wineries we're going to try to visit when we make it up that way for a wedding next summer.

Speaking of trip planning, if you've got recommendations for us, please leave them in the comments, and be sure to tell us why you're recommending a given winery.



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7 Responses to Six New Yorkers Walk Into an Aviary, Hundreds of Tweets Ensur



September 26
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GrapeEnvyGuy

We got home from work, pulled the wines out, and tasted through them all just in advance of the actual twitter tasting. After we were done, we compared notes and were absolutely shocked. SHOCKED!. that we were in complete agreement right down to the rank order. While I ranked the Damiani second, it was what I had a hankering for the following night. VWD also wanted some, so she insisted on playing punch for punch to see who got a bigger poor. Dude. She hits HARD.

It's been my experience that Virginia Rieslings aren't that awesome, but New York Rieslings are something special. Next summer when we take Swirl,Sip,Snark to New York I'd be channeling that awesome predator of lop-eared antagonists

- Unicorn Winery
- Valhalla Winery
- Vault Field Vineyards
- Veramar Vineyard
- Veritas Vineyards
- Village Winery
- Vineyard/Winery
- Vino Curioso
- Vint Hill Craft Winery
- Vintage Ridge Vineyards
- Virginia Governor's Cup
- Virginia wine blogs
- Virginia Wine Festival
- Virginia Wine Law
- Virginia Wine Month
- Virginia Wine Trips
- Virginia Wineworks/Michael Shaps Wines
- Well Hung Vineyard
- Weston Farm Vineyard and Winery
- White Fences Vineyard
- White Hall Vineyards
- White Rock Vineyards & Winery
- Willowcroft Vineyards
- Windsong Winery
- Wine and Zombies
- Wine Bar
- Wine Blog Awards
- Wine Bloggers Conference
- wine blogging wednesday
- Wine Blogs
- Wine Chat
- Wine Politics
- Wine Review
- Wine Shop
- Wine Storage
- Winery at La Grange
- Wines of Chile
- Wintergreen Winery
- Wisteria Farm and Vineyard
- Wolf Gap Vineyard & Winery
- Zephaniah Farm Vineyard

and saying %be vevy vevy quiet, lqn hunting Wieswings.+



September 26
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Damiani Wine Cellars

Thanks, you guys! It was a fun night, and from a winery perspective, a great opportunity to interact with passionate tasters (who also happen to tweet about it!) We're glad to have helped rekindle your interest in Finger Lakes wine. What other Finger Lakes varieties do you enjoy? Cheers! Amy C @damianiwine



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Ed

Linda and I don't tweet but we passed comments around with some FL friends that night via facebook. We opened a 2010 Heart & Hands plus a 2009 Red Newt . I forget if it was the Davis or Sawmill Creek Vineyard. Both dry but the difference between the 2009 and 2010 vintages was amazing. Way more acid to the 2009!

Hey Amy . nice to see you here! We'll be up your way late next week.



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MC

I'm jealous to hear you're going up to the Finger Lakes! It is such a great break from everything . it's remote, beautiful, and has delicious wines. Obviously I'm a huge Virginia wine fan/proponent but love come to love Virginia and the Finger Lakes equally.

I'm partial to Keuka Lake because I used to live there (and it's the best one). As far as recommendations go - do the tour at Pleasant Valley Winery to get all the history of the area and then try the wines at Dr. Frank's (of course) as well as Ravines and McGregor's (I used to work there!). If you want to splurge on a nice dinner out, go to Pleasant Valley Inn. Still one of my favorite restaurants of all time.

And if you have any extra room in your luggage, take me with you!



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VAWineDiva

Amy, Other than rieslings, I think we've only had 2 other Finger Lakes wines (a cab franc from friends who live in the area and a vignoles that Lenn Thompson included in our half of an interstate wine trade we worked out...although I'm pretty sure there's another bottle or two in the haul from Lenn that we've yet to open). We do look forward to learning more about the region and the wines when we visit next summer (and by reading blogs and lurking on twitter), but these are hard wines to get in VA.

Ed, we're glad to hear that you were able to be part of the fun, even if twitter isn't your thing. Make sure you let us know about your recommendations since you spend so much time visiting the area.

MC, Thanks for your suggestions, they'll definitely go into the mix (and with a nice enough wedding gift, I'm sure our

friends would let you tag along 😊)



Ed

MC . We've been going up at least 2x a year for the last 5 or 6 years. We always stay at Magnolia Place on the east side of Seneca . awesome B&B but I have to admit that we've stayed there so often that Teri & Ted are now good friends!

(<http://saveurthegoodlife.blogspot.com/2011/08/magnolia-place-southern-hospitality-in.html>) Love your recs for Keuka . some of our favorite places there. Of course, there are lots on Seneca that we love as much (or more to be honest)

Diva . when you guys are ready, we'll chat/email/FB. Linda and I can come up with lots of ideas! (Including visiting Amy at Damiani!!!)

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VAWineDiva

Thanks Ed. We'll definitely take you up on that!

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