



BY LINDA BARRETT

# Join the Club

## WINERY WINE CLUBS ARE THE NEW “MUST BELONG”

### Survey Results:

#### MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING WINE CLUB MEMBERSHIP

1. Discounts on wine/merchandise
2. Special tastings during winery visits
3. Access to special wines
4. Discounts on or free shipping
5. Personal contact with winery staff
6. Invitations to wine club events at the winery
7. Invitations to wine events in other cities

—Source: Wine Market Council, 2014

I RECENTLY JOINED MY FIRST WINERY WINE CLUB, AND I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES THIS MEMBERSHIP WILL AFFORD ME.

Wine clubs are the newest way to personally get involved with your favorite winery. Most, if not all, of Virginia’s wineries are now offering wine clubs that provide exclusive benefits that might include private tastings and uncorking events, discounts on bottle or case purchases, free wine tastings, winery-based events, off-site events, cocktail parties, wine dinners, evenings with the winemaker...the list goes on. Most offer no membership fees, and easy club cancellation policies.

The key is choosing the right wine club for you.

- First, select a winery at which you really enjoy the wines. As a club member, you will be required to purchase a minimum amount.
- Second, decide what is most important to you: is it the discounts, the social aspect, the VIP treatment, or the educational aspects of winemaking?
- Third, ask your favorite wineries about what exclusive benefits they offer, their payment and pickup procedures, and their cancellation policy.

### Wine Club Statistics Give the True Story

According to the Wine Market Council’s 2014 statistics, wine clubs are becoming more popular: 30% of the wine-drinking population surveyed belongs to one winery club, 20% to two, and 18% to three. Eight percent belong to seven or more winery wine clubs and those surveyed reported



### WHO’S JOINING WINE CLUBS?

57% OF THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION

23% OF THE GEN X

11% OF THE MILLENIALS

9% AGE 68 OR OLDER

overwhelmingly that they were either “very satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with their wine club choices.

Just who’s joining? According to statistics, it’s the Baby Boomer generation (born 1946-1965) that’s dominating the wine club scene, with over 57% of those surveyed falling into that category, followed by 23% in the Gen X category (born 1966-1976, 11% Millennials (born 1977-1994), and 9% age 68 or older.

### *Wine Enjoyment Clubs*

Aside from winery wine clubs, there are other wine groups enthusiasts can join, including The Virginia Wine Club, a Meetup group for anyone interested in wine, whether new or an expert, part of a couple or single. Join and receive calendar notifications of where the group will be going next. Enjoy a fun afternoon eating lasagna at Naked Mountain Winery or barbeque at Hiddencroft Vineyards, enjoy a comedy show at Bogati Bodega or Notaviva, or gather at a member’s home for a wine-tasting challenge. These are just a few of the interesting outings planned by this group.

### *Wine Clubs are Attractive to Winery Owners Too*

Wine clubs are an attractive proposition to winery owners as well, and can substantially enhance customer service and sales, especially at small wineries where distribution channels are limited. With wine club members, owners can count on a certain number of sales in a given year.

For most winery owners, the tasting room is the recruiting tool for wine club members. People stop in, enjoy the wines, and learn about membership.

The trick for winery owners is to know their wine club members’ preferences, buying habits, age, and gender. This way the owners can develop interesting and engaging offerings to



Here is what’s offered at a sampling of Virginia winery clubs:

**PRINCE MICHEL WINERY** offers five wine clubs, including ones for sweet wine, red, and white wine lovers.

**PEARMUND CELLARS** offers exclusive access to their Library wines, new releases and special selections from the Craft Winery at Vint Hill, and free tasting coupons for your next visit.

**GREENHILL WINERY** offers free tastings Friday through Sunday, exclusive invitations to release and other parties, access to join a wine trip to France, flexible wine selection, and private access to the historic Club House located on the estate.

**TRUMP WINERY’S** wine club offers three membership levels, a newsletter, access to special and new releases, and members-only special events, both at the Winery and other Trump properties.

**GADINO CELLARS** offers three membership clubs and an “adopt-a-barrel” program. Participate in their yearly harvest event and receive a free one-year membership and other privileges.

**BULL RUN WINERY** offers The General’s Club. For a one-time registration fee you receive free tastings, wine glasses, access to their private Battlefield-view deck, and discounts.

**NAKED MOUNTAIN WINERY** wine club offers private tasting events, interaction with the winemakers, and Pick-Up Parties upon the release of their semi-annual shipments.

**ROSEMONT OF VIRGINIA’S** wine club offers wines hand-chosen by the winemaker, access to new releases and limited production runs, discounts, and discounts to Rosemont festivals and events.

**THE WINERY AT LA GRANGE** offers regular and volume wine purchase discounts, plus discounts on merchandise and facility rentals, 50% off facility rental for your birthday, and a bottle of their Reserve Sparkling Wine when you join, for a small one-time membership fee.

**STONE TOWER WINERY’S TOWER CRU WINE CLUB** offers a complimentary tour of the vineyards and facilities, discounts on all wine purchases, and two wine tasting tickets with each quarterly shipment.

not only attract wine club members, but keep them. Help them out by providing this information, if asked, whether in person, through an email survey, or other forms of contact.

I’ve just received my first invitation from my wine club and am excited

to meet some of the other members and enjoy my first wine shipment. VIP treatment? That’s for me. ❖

#### RESOURCES

The Virginia Wine Club Meetup, [www.meetup.com/wine-16/](http://www.meetup.com/wine-16/)

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