

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

## Keswick prize-winner carries hints of violet, blueberry, even cedar

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Violet and blueberry aromas, even some cedar. Wonderful black cherry and fruit forward tastes. Rich tannins that fill the mouth.

This Keswick Vineyards wine, a 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon that contains 25 percent Merlot, was poured from a decanter at Keswick's booth during this past weekend's Virginia Wine Expo. The decanting gave a hint that this was a special wine.

Special it was, as it was named the Governor's Cup winner from among 250 wines that entered the 2009 contest.

Keswick winemaker and general manager Stephen Barnard has been at Keswick since 2002, but this was the first Cabernet Sauvignon varietal (75 percent of the dominant grape is required) he made after concentrating on Cabernet Francs and blends.

Barnard said the growing fields at Keswick were the reason for making a Cabernet Sauvignon: "I have always been a firm believer that the wines are made in the vineyard, and this is more true in Virginia than anywhere else. This particular wine reflects the good growing season we had."

What a reflection it's going to be. ". . . the 2007 Vintage . . . will go down in years to come as one of the truly great ones in the Virginia wine industry," Barnard said.

Barnard sensed from the beginning something special was happening.

"Every now and again, you have a wine in your winery that you fall in love with early on, and you earmark, hopefully for higher honors," he said. "That is how we all felt about this Cab. Hopefully we can find ways in which to produce this kind of quality consistently."

As well as it drinks now, it will be even better in the future, Barnard said.

"There is good acidity so the wine remains very fresh and vibrant, but there is no doubt that it will need another one to two years in the bottle before it shows its full potential," Barnard said.

"With bottle age I hope that we will develop secondary aromas like cedar, truffles and cigar box, very distinct flavors associated with fine Cabernets."

As for making the wine, Barnard said he took a bit of a chance with certain technical aspects.

"This kind of winemaking is a bit risky to say the least, but when it works, the results are sometimes quite spectacular," he said.

The Cabernet Sauvignon can be purchased only at Keswick (<http://www.keswickvineyards.com> or (434) 244-3341), and costs \$59.95.

Keswick and Barnard also produced another gold medal winner, a red Meritage called Heritage (\$34.95), another Cabernet-Merlot blend.

"It's very similar winemaking, a touch softer and maybe a bit brighter in flavor profile, more red fruit characters than the Cabernet," Barnard said. "The fruit [as with the Cab] is all estate grown and comes from our 7-acre Bordeaux parcel that grows on a shale soil at the back of our property that we think is perfect for red grape varieties.

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Attendance for the second Expo, expanded by a day, was 6,300 to 6,500, up from about 5,600 last year but not the number Executive Expo Director Alex Papajohn hoped for.

"There's no question the economy undercut the growth," he said. "But I'm very pleased with how well received the event was by the attendees, by everyone. People said, 'you made so many great improvements.'"

And more will be on the way for next year when he expects to add an opening-night, off-site, low-priced launch party as well as several lead-up wine dinners and a Saturday-night function.

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*"Vines & Wines" appears alternate weeks in the Food section.*

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