



downtime DESTINATIONS

Vino, vidi, **VIRGINIA**

Skip the trip to Bordeaux and head instead to one of the world's best wine travel destinations, practically in our own backyard. Here's what's new in the land of that old oenophile Thomas Jefferson.

BY KATE PARHAM

Thomas Jefferson would be so proud. And maybe a little jealous. In 1784, he journeyed to France, where he tasted fine wines and decided that the port and Madeira of his American countrymen was, well, not up to snuff. He soon became Virginia's first distinguished viticulturist, planting grapes at his home, Monticello. But he didn't have much luck. Today, Jefferson's beloved state has completely reversed that misfortune. *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* named Virginia one of the 10 best wine travel destinations for 2012 (along with Italy, Chile, California and France,). The state now boasts more than 200 wineries, 16 wine trails and nine wine regions. Toss in Virginia's rich history and the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and you've got a vacation just waiting for you to take it.

If you do decide to go, here's what's new and noteworthy at some of the hottest spots in Virginia wine country.

Keswick Hall's Courtyard Vineyard

701 Club Dr., Keswick, Va.
434-979-3440
keswick.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: This stunning mansion near Monticello was voted 'Number 1 Top Small Resorts' in the country by *Condé Nast Traveler*. The first vineyard was planted in May 2010. By fall of 2011, with a third of an acre devoted to Petit Manseng, a white wine grape indigenous to southwest France, winemaker Richard Hewitt harvested 600 pounds of grapes, producing one barrel (about 300 bottles). The wine will be bottled this month and is available for purchase on-site. Hewitt hopes to produce twice as much wine next year.

INSIDER TIP: In September 2011, Keswick Hall developed an iPad app to replace the traditional paper wine list and take the guesswork out of selecting a wine. The app, which launched at the restaurant



Clockwise from top Left: Table of Viogniers from Chrysalis Vineyards, the horizon pool at Keswick Hall's Courtyard Vineyard, Trump Winery and King Family Vineyards. **Opposite Page:** Chatham Vineyards.

in February 2012, allows guests to peruse the wine list, clicking on individual wines to learn more about them. Users can also search for wines by category, varietal, region and more.

Barrel Oak Winery

3623 Grove Ln., Delaplane, Va.
540-364-6402
barreloak.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Brian and Sharon Roeder opened their Northern Virginia winery (about one hour west of D.C.) in 2008 and have gained national press coverage for their family- and dog-friendliness — not to mention awards for technical merit. “[We didn’t want guests] to [have to] find a sitter for the dogs and kids,” says Brian. “So, at Barrel Oak, everyone is welcome.” Kids (and other guests) can expect juice boxes, sparkling water and coffee or tea, while dogs get treats slipped to them under the bar.

INSIDER TIP: Keep an eye on the winery’s event calendar for the annual birthday party for Barrel Oak’s dog, Birch, and the annual Stomp and Chomp Harvest Party, where families are encouraged to become apprentice winemakers by stomping grapes Lucy-style in a giant vat.

Chatham Vineyards

9232 Chatham Rd.,
Machipongo, Va.
757-678-5588
chathamvineyards.net

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Looking for something a little more adventurous than swirling and sipping? How about a kayak wine tour! In partnership with SouthEast Expeditions, Chatham Vineyards, home to the world’s first kayak winery tour, offers guests the opportunity to paddle their way through the Eastern Shore of Virginia

(a 45-minute trek through Church Creek) before getting a behind-the-scenes tour and tasting at the 400-year old, family-owned and operated winery. On the return trip, plan for a picnic on a secluded creek isle with your favorite bottle of wine from the vineyard.

INSIDER TIP: The kayak tours are offered from March through December for \$85 per person, which includes a bottle of wine for each couple, paddling gear and tour guide.

Chrysalis Vineyards

23876 Champe Ford Rd.,
Middleburg, Va.
540-687-8222
chrysaliswine.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: If you’re a music lover, visit Chrysalis Vineyards, located about 35 miles west of downtown D.C., during harvest time. Every October, visitors enjoy the bluegrass pickings of Jackass Flats, Circa Blue and A Good Natured Riot during the Norton Wine & Bluegrass Festival, which also includes food from some of Virginia’s best producers (think cheese, chocolates and chutneys), as well as jewelry and art from local artisans, hay rides and vineyard tours.

INSIDER TIP: A special nine-wine tasting that encompasses all of the winery’s Nortons (and a commemorative take-home glass) is also available during the festival. Admission is \$20 per person at the door.

King Family Vineyards

6550 Roseland Farm,
Crozet, Va.
434-823-7800
kingfamilyvineyards.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Looking for something a little regal to do while you sip

CELEBRITY-OWNED WINERIES

Dave Matthews may have started the trend back in 2000 when he opened Virginia’s first celebrity-owned winery **Blenheim Vineyards** (31 Blenheim Farm, Charlottesville, Va., 434-293-5366), but more VIPs are following suit.

Take **AOL’s co-founder and former CEO Steve Case**, who, along with his wife, Jean, purchased Sweely Estate Winery in November 2011, renaming the winery **Early Mountain Vineyards** (6109 Wolfstown-Hood Rd., Madison, Va., 540-948-9005) and renovating the tasting room and event venues. The new tasting room, set to open this month, will be one of the largest in the state, and the new wines, including Pinot Gris, Viognier and Cabernet Franc, are set to release in September.

And last but not least, real estate mogul **Donald Trump** bought the former 1,000-acre Kluge Estate Winery and Vineyard from socialite and longtime friend Patricia Kluge last spring during a foreclosure auction. Trump’s son Eric now runs the vineyard, **Trump Winery** (100 Grand Cru Dr., Charlottesville, Va., 434-977-3895), alongside Kluge and famed Bordeaux wine blender Michel Rolland.



Left: Little Washington Winery. **Right:** Pippin Hill Farm & Winery.

sensational spirits? Check out the apolo matches at King Family Vineyards (Gold medal winner for their 2008 Meritage Blend at the 2012 Governor's Cup), which are held each Sunday at 1:30 p.m. from Memorial Day weekend through mid-October. Matches are free and open to the public. Food (local cheese, meats, olives, bread and hummus) and wine is available in the Tasting Room, but visitors are welcome to bring a picnic lunch along with them and park tailgate-style around the

field with blankets, chairs and umbrellas. Guests can arrive as early as 11 a.m. (when the Tasting Room opens) to grab their wine and spot by the field.

Pippin Hill Farm & Winery

5022 Plank Rd.,
North Garden, Va.
434-202-8063
pippinhillfarm.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Founded by the former CFO of Orient-Express hotels

Dean Andrews and his wife Lynn Easton Andrews (founder of Easton Events) this vineyard on the Monticello Wine Trail celebrated its one-year anniversary on Memorial Day weekend. With a panoramic valley view, Pippin Hill features a variety of indoor and outdoor venues for events — from the wine cellar to the veranda and the gorgeous farmhouse — and can accommodate up to 200 guests. The Bridal Loft, a residential-style bridal party suite with a full bathroom, walk-in closet and

1. Chrysalis Vineyards, Middleburg, Va.
2. Barrel Oak Winery, Delaplane, Va.
3. Little Washington, Winery, Washington, Va.
4. Cave Ridge Vineyards, Mount Jackson, Va.
5. King Family Vineyard, Crozet, Va.
6. Pippin Hill Farm & Winery, North Garden, Va.
7. Keswick Hall's Courtyard Vineyard, Keswick, Va.
8. Chatham Vineyards, Machipongo, Va.



VIRGINIA **WINE COUNTRY**

food, can be scheduled for the entire special day.

INSIDER TIP: The folks here have a passion for wine and food pairings, which feature locally sourced food products and a menu from on-site chef Amalia Scatena. Have a seat on the covered stone terrace overlooking the six-acre vineyard, and enjoy the seasonal pairings.

Cave Ridge Vineyards

1476 Conicville Rd.,
Mount Jackson, Va.
540-477-2585
caveridge.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: In commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War, Virginia wineries have created the Passport program to connect wineries, history and battlefields. Participating wineries are offering special-label wines saluting the Civil War Sesquicentennial, like the Shenandoah Valley's Cave Ridge Vineyards, which bottled two of their best wines — a Viognier and a Chambourcin — with a label showing a soldier guarding the valley.

INSIDER TIP: The joint venture between the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and Cave Ridge Winery, whose commemorative label is the Foundation's new official logo, donates a portion of the sale of each special-label bottle to the Foundation.

Little Washington Winery

72 Christmas Tree Ln.,
Washington, Va.
540-987-8265
littlewashingtonwinery.com

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Rappahannock County's newest winery, the Little Washington Winery, opened in November of 2011 in Shenandoah National Park. With some of the most impressive panoramic views in the state, the winery is the perfect spot for a picnic on the expansive vista deck or the shade deck in the backyard forest. This new 25-acre destination farm produces small-batch wines, like Viognier and Bordeaux varietals, from some of the most coveted vineyards in Virginia.

INSIDER TIP: When you visit the winery, be sure to try their "Dirt Road Wine Tour," which showcases craft wines produced in boutique wineries around the world courtesy of the winery's sommelier Andrew Stover of OYA Restaurant & Lounge in Washington, D.C. Then buy what you like at The Dirt Road Wine Shop, which features wines from Virginia and everywhere from Idaho to Austria, Spain and New Zealand.

VIRGINIA'S VARIETALS

A wine is only as good as its terroir, or growing region. But which varietals grow best in the state?

Viognier: Viognier is a naturally lower acid grape that can either produce wines with crisp citrus aromas or floral, fruity flavors, says Jennifer Knowles, wine director for The Inn at Little Washington. The Washington, Va., inn stocks 12,000 bottles in inventory and has 2,600 selections on the wine list.

Cabernet Franc: A native Bordeaux grape, "Cabernet Franc — one of the parents of Cabernet Sauvignon, the other being Sauvignon Blanc— is all about mineral, dried tobacco, cedar, bell pepper and dried herbs in its 'native' home in the Loire Valley of France," says Knowles.

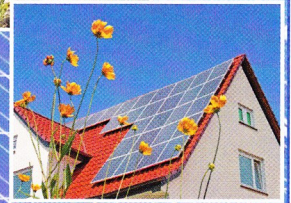
Blanc de Blanc: Blanc de Blanc is used to designate Champagnes made exclusively from Chardonnay grapes. "To make a great sparkling wine, Chardonnay grapes need to have just the right combination of sunlight and temperature to ripen the grapes slowly," says Jonathan Wheeler, the sparkling winemaker at Trump Winery in Charlottesville, Va..

Petit Verdot: "Petite Verdot is the unsung hero of the wines made in Bordeaux," says Knowles, who admits she was among those who had rarely, if ever, sampled the variety bottled on its own. "However, after sampling over a dozen examples during a blind tasting, I discovered a wine that could easily be Virginia's answer to the popularity of Argentinean Malbec or Chilean Carmeneré."

Petit Manseng: Petit Manseng, a small, thick-skinned white grape grown primarily in Southwest France, is an up-and-coming dark horse in the Virginia wine world, producing what Knowles believes to be "some of the most interesting and underrated dry and sweet wines in the world."

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Angie's list

