



Vendor Spotlight: Unionville Vineyards

Monday, May 7, 2018

Where is the wine from Unionville Vineyards made?

The grapes are grown at estate vineyards, five properties farmed in Mercer and Hunterdon County. We grow all the grapes, pick the fruit, and make the wine. We are 100% estate, which means it is grown, produced, bottled, and sold by our winery. A lot of people in wine industry buy grape juice or finished wine and label it, but we authentically handle each step from grape to the final packaging.

Why did you choose that location?

When planting grapes, winemakers are looking for south-facing slopes. Sites are carefully selected for maximum sun exposure and pristine ripening conditions. Grape vines don't like to sit in water; they need well-drained soil with maximum sun exposure.

What brought Unionville Vineyards to New Hope Ferry Market?

We needed more visibility. Our winery is off highway 202 near Ringoes. Although it is a beautiful part of the state with horse pastures and farmland, Ferry Market is a great way to introduce people to our wines. We meet new

customers there, allow them to taste the wines, and invite them to our winery.

How many bottles of wine do you produce each year?

It is easier to quantify in cases, we produce 4,500 to 5,000 cases, which hold 12 bottles of wine. Altogether, it is probably between 54,000 and 60,000 bottles of wine.

Can you please tell us about the winemaking process?

It starts in the vineyard with growing excellent fruit. We carefully tend the plants and monitor them year round. Pruning starts in the winter time; there is no offseason for grape growing. The harvest is in September, we prune where we need to, get good quality fruit to work with, pick the grapes, crush them, and get all the juice out. Fermentation begins using native yeast in the environment or commercial yeast that is purchased. It takes one to four weeks for fermentation, depending on temperature. The wine is filtered and put in barrels, which allows the wine to mature and take on different flavors and structural characteristics.

How do Unionville's farming practices manifest in the final wine?

Everything is done by hand. We prune by hand, hedge by hand, and pick by hand. Everything is done extremely carefully; it is hands-on, eyes on, and meticulous. I truly care for our vineyards. Obviously our wine is great; it is a boutique and artisan product.

Which wines does Unionville offer?

Unionville has 15 different wines. There are light bodied and fresh aromatic wines. Rosé is great for the summertime, we also have a serious barrel aged white. We grow a lot of Rhone varieties; they are very complex. It takes a year to make it in a barrel, then a year in the bottle. We offer light-bodied reds, pinot noir, and medium bodied syrah.

We have a focused portfolio highlighting aromatics, acidity, and balance.

What words do you use to describe wine?

There are chemical compounds in wine, which are also present in other fruits. They are things you can smell and taste. Take a raspberry for example; you can't describe a raspberry as tasting like a raspberry. Think of it as if you were a peaking chemist; you must describe the flavonoid chemical compounds present in the wine. If you bite into an apple, you might say it has a honey characteristic, even though there is no honey in the apple. When someone uses says "this wine has notes of strawberry", the same chemical compounds are present in the wine as a strawberry.

Which characteristics should people consider when purchasing wine?

Value. Everyone defines that differently. Some people don't put a high value on a glass or bottle of wine and won't spend more than ten dollars. For some, they put more value on a pleasurable experience with wine and will pay more. They may want a specific representation of a place it came from or winemaker. If you took three people and asked them to put a value on wine, each of those three people would value wine differently. What do you want from the wine? That is what you should pay.

What do you consider a great wine?

A great wine represents a place and philosophy. It expresses the land it came from and will have influence from its winemaker. The winemaker will execute decisions throughout the production year of the wine. Wine should be more than a tasty way to get buzzed, it tells a story and communicates the place it came from and the year it was grown.

What is the proper way to taste wine?

That is subjective, but if you want to approach wine on a higher level you should read about it. Discover where it came from; learn about vintage, weather, and winemaking notes. What did the winemaker do to the wine throughout the season? Why did they make the decisions that they did? You want to understand it thoroughly. When you are ready to taste, look at the wine. First, evaluate it based on sight, then swirl your glass, and take a sip. The bottom line for me is to enjoy wine thoughtfully, whatever that means to taster.

How do you recommend serving wine?

There are some suggestions that are universal. Start with a clean polished glass and look up the appropriate temperature online. In general, white wines are usually served too cold and red wines are served too warm. Most wine should be served between 45-55 degrees. The glass should have a stem, so your hands don't heat up the wine and your fingerprints don't smudge the glass. Wine should be stored in a cool dark, quiet place with low humidity. If you don't have this type of environment, drink your wine quickly!

How do you pair wine with food?

In general wine is a food and part of the meal. It belongs as the partner to any great dish. If you eat well, you should drink well. A great wine refreshes the palate and makes each bite as delicious as the first. You should match the weight of wine with the food. Light bodied wine should be served with light-bodied food. A big fat steak should be served with syrah. A delicate fish would go well with a with pinot grigio.

What do you enjoy most about wine?

I enjoy wine's ability to communicate. Wine is placed in the world as more than just a beverage. Beer is an assembled and

manufactured product, but wine is grown. It comes from the land. When you enjoy vodka, whiskey, or beer you don't have the expectation that they represent a place or the raw materials it came from. Unlike other beverages, wine represents a year, vintage, growing season. It has the ability to communicate a place and time more so than other beverages.

What is the most rewarding part of working at Unionville?

The most rewarding part of this job is getting to represent a product I love and believe in. Our team is equally passionate about what we're doing, our mission to showcase what wine in New Jersey can be. I enjoy coming to work and driving onto the beautiful 89 acre preserved farm. Our winery has the original barn and the property is gorgeous. This stunning place is where I call my office. I do interesting things like planning our growing season, talking with the winemakers, adjusting our techniques, designing labels with our marketing team, and interacting with patrons. There are so many things to do, no two days are the same.

To what do you contribute your success?

We're genuine in our approach and proud of what we do. Our wine speaks to people; we can stand behind our product. We feel we are producing some of the best wines on the East Coast and they are made in central New Jersey. It's very rewarding.

Where do you see Unionville Vineyards in five years?

First, we will move from a 5,000 case winery to a 10,000 case winery. Then we will open another tasting bar besides New Hope. We will create a satellite tasting room in another location to introduce people to our brand. We intend to expand our restaurant list and offer a glass of wine at

each restaurant in the area. Unionville is licensed in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, we would like to see more restaurants in New Hope, Doylestown and the surrounding areas offer our local wine. We intend to build a position where we can take advantage of that opportunity when they are ready to offer it.

What is a good resource people can use to learn more about wine?

Come to our tasting bar in New Hope. Joe is our regular guy, he is experienced and knowledgeable. You can also take a tour at Unionville with our multiple winemakers. All of our employees can communicate our story and talk about wine on a high level. Our team explores a grape and region once a month. We taste wine in a very thorough and educational way with the goal that it trickles down to our customers

Ferry Market would like to congratulate Unionville Vineyards on their recent accolades. They are the only winery in Pennsylvania or New Jersey recognized as Food and Wine's Top 500 Wineries in the Country. According to Wine Enthusiast, Unionville produces some of the Best Wines on the East Coast. Unionville winemakers have also won the Local Heroes award in Edible Jersey for their artisan beverages. To try their handmade, carefully crafted, and exceptional estate wines, visit their tasting room at the Ferry Market. Ask your server to pair one of their fabulous wines with the many other food options in the market!