

We're all decked out for the holidays and looking fabulously festive. La Vallée's "contemporary wine country cuisine", inspired by some of our amazing western wine regions—the Napa, Columbia and Okanagan Valleys to be exact, is a hit with seasonal celebrants. Our wine country menu has been tweaked to accommodate festive group menus featuring contemporary flavours married with classic French themes all of course pairing brilliantly with treats from our well-stocked West Coast wine cellar. New Year's is in our sights too and we hope you'll be here to mark it in La Vallée style. And in mid-January, Dine Out Vancouver slams into Vancouver for 19 days with dining deals at over 150 restaurants including La Vallée.

As our guests, you've probably noticed that all of us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park have a thing for West Coast wines. We've partnered with many of these western wineries and named rooms and suites after them; we've hung wine-themed art hither and yon; there's a sweet wine list happening in La Vallée restaurant and lounge; and B.C. wines are stocked in mini-bars. And in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary happy hour wine tastings in La Vallée's lounge. Got a little time to spare? We can arrange wine tours to B.C.'s wine regions and beyond.

Just so you know, we strive to have as much fun with our great West Coast wines as we can, and that means tasting widely, increasing our partnerships with the wineries, and sharing our finds with our guests. You'll see what we mean and why as we profile these wineries, their winemakers and their best bottles in our wine letters.

Check out our wine event listings below, which includes La Vallée's monthly pampering event, Manicures and Martinis that takes place the second Tuesday of each month.

Just the Facts

Here's the dirt on B.C. wines and wine country:

- Jesuit missionary Father Charles Pandosy first made wine in B.C. in 1859 in the Okanagan; the first commercial wines were made in the 1920s; and B.C. wines stepped up in 1990 when old varieties of grapes were pulled out and replanted with premium varieties.

- Currently, B.C. has 140 licensed wineries (in 1981 there were just 14 struggling to make a buck) and another 26-or-so in the pipeline. This includes a dozen fruit wineries, cider makers, and sake (rice wine) producers.
- There are 411 grape growers growing 60 grape varieties (48% are white, 52% are red).
- The top whites are chardonnay, pinot gris, and gewürztraminer; top reds include merlot, pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon.
- In 2006, 6,632 acres of land were under vine.
- We have five wine regions:
 - the Okanagan
 - Similkameen
 - Fraser Valley
 - Vancouver Island
 - Gulf Islands

And since we're also partial to other West Coast wine regions, namely the Columbia Valley in Washington, and Napa Valley in California, you'll find some of their top wines on La Vallée's expanded wine list too. If you haven't visited the regions, do. The landscape is unlike anything else on earth...and you'll understand why it's "the perfect climate for wine."

Wine Buys:

Want to take a bottle or two home? Here are a couple of our favourite wine shops, handily within strolling distance.

Marquis Wine Cellars, Vancouver's first wine shop, has a stellar selection of B.C.'s best bottles, and hot picks from the West Coast. Ask for resident wine guru David Lancelot.
1034 Davie Street, 604-684-2471,
www.marquis-wines.com

Taylorwood Wines sells only B.C. wines at winery-direct prices. Ask for a taste—there's usually something open.
1185 Mainland Street
604-408-9463
www.taylorwoodwines.com

Spotlight

Wine Region: The Okanagan

The Okanagan wine region may be B.C.'s biggest but it's pretty piddling in size when you compare it to say, Napa. While it's said to have North America's most scenic vineyards—hectares of them rise from lakeshores to climb up mountain slopes—it's got plenty more going for it. Like a four-lake daisy chain running the length of the Okanagan Valley providing optimal growing conditions with long warm sunny days and cool nights with the heat from the lakes tempering the chill. The valley runs from the US border about 160 kilometres (100 miles) north, and all of this combines to provide superb growing conditions for wines that run the spectrum from auxerrois to zinfandel. Wine touring is a breeze with wineries running the length of the lakes; tasting rooms are open year-round; many of the wineries have on-site restaurants, delis, and picnic areas. Accommodation ranges from campsites to lakeside resorts. Local wines are found in abundance in restaurants everywhere

Winery: Jackson-Triggs Okanagan

One of Canada's most celebrated wineries, founded in 1993 by Don Triggs and Allan Jackson, consistently produces some of the country's most outstanding wines winning titles like best Canadian winery four times, winemaker of the year several times and even best shiraz in the world---all of these at the London International Wine & Spirits Competition. Canadian awards are equally abundant. The winery expanded in 2002 and now has 36,000 square feet of space that is already almost at capacity. A beautifully designed and appointed tasting room opened in 2006 and is open year round.

Wine Wiz: Brooke Blair

With long time multi-award winning Jackson-Triggs winemaker Bruce Nicholson now working his magic at the Inniskillin Niagara winery in Ontario (he made the move in January 2007), his former assistants Derek Kontkanen and Brooke Blair have stepped up and taken the reins of this high profile winery. The young team worked under Nicholson's exacting guidance for several years and are poised, confident and have wrapped their first solo vintage. Twenty-seven year old Blair, an Australian by birth, arrived in Canada in 2004 after graduating with a degree in agriculture. On arriving at J-T she was handed the red wine portfolio and hasn't looked back. She's definitely one to watch as she finds her place among the growing numbers of the Okanagan's smart young female winemakers.

Top Drops:

White: Jackson-Triggs Meritage Okanagan Valley 2004

This stellar Meritage is a blend of sauvignon blanc (70%) and semillon (30%) and sees time in both French and American oak. It's elegant and complex with notes of citrus, melon, and soft toasty oak. Ideal with pasta primavera, Asian-inspired duck dishes, shrimp, and soft cheeses.

Red: Jackson Triggs Merlot Reserve Okanagan Valley 2004

Nose this complex and elegantly structured merlot and you'll find ripe blackberries, vanilla, and cherry notes backed by hits of anise, coffee, and smoke. Bring on the lamb, beef, veal and aged gouda and cheddar.

Cool Stuff: Wine in moderate quantities (two glasses a day) helps to combat many medical conditions including dementia, stroke and other cerebrovascular diseases, cancer, cataracts, rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoporosis. Recently it's been put forth that women benefit almost as much as men.

Wine Speak

Don't know a fat wine from a thin one? Woody from wooly? Here's where we let you in on some of the lingo that goes along with wine. Drop a few of these babies and you'll sound like a pro.

Brilliant: This in wines can mean the same as in humans, i.e. distinguished or splendid but mostly it refers to as wine's colour. A brilliant wine is clear, with no haze or cloudiness.

What's on?

If you're around or you'll be back soon, put some of these on your calendar:

Early Bird Tickets on sale for the

Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival 2008

(Ciao, Italia! February 25 to March 4)

604-872-6622
www.playhousewinefest.com

December 2, 2007

"S.O.S." Wines!!

Taylorwood Wines, 3-5 p.m. (free)
1185 Mainland Street
Wines to keep on hand for those drop-in guests and spur-of-the-moment menus. Versatile and economical!
www.taylorwoodwines.com

December 5

Rare White Alba Truffle Dinner

with wines from Dogliani's Beni Di Batasiolo collection
La Terrazza Restaurant, 7 p.m.
1088 Cambie Street, 604-899-4449
www.laterrazza.ca

December 8

Rollingdale Icewines

Taylorwood Wines, 4:30-6:30 p.m. (free)
1185 Mainland Street
Join Tim and learn about organic winemaking and icewine trivia.
www.taylorwoodwines.com

December 11

Martinis & Manicures

La Vallée Restaurant & Lounge, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
An irresistible New York inspired, after-work monthly indulgence –
Martinis & Manicures (\$40)

December 13

Holiday Dinner Wines

Taylorwood Wines, 4:30-6:30 p.m. (free)
1185 Mainland Street
www.taylorwoodwines.com

January 14 to 19

10th Annual Icewine Festival

Sun Peaks Resort
800-807-3257
sunpeaksresort.com/activities/events/icewine.aspx

January 16 to February 3

Dine Out Vancouver

Dozens of the city's finest restaurants offer 3-course menus priced at \$15, \$25, or \$35

tourismvancouver.com/visitors/dining/dine_out_vancouver