

We officially unveiled La Vallée Restaurant (www.lavalleerestaurant.com), our recently renovated, recreated, and renamed restaurant and lounge, to the world with a splashy do last month to resounding acclaim. Well, when they say nice things like "A new jewel in Vancouver's culinary crown," "What a gorgeous restaurant," "The perfect restaurant to sneak off to..." and "Dining at this vino-themed restaurant is the perfect ending to an intoxicating vacation," we're pleased as all get out. Add to this the fact that we were recently included in Vancouver Magazine's 2007 City Guide roundup of fine restaurants and it shows that we've got it right.

So what's all the hoopla about? Simply that La Vallée's "contemporary wine country cuisine" is inspired by some of our amazing western wine regions—the Napa, Columbia and Okanagan Valleys to be exact. Our wine country menu was designed by Chef Gregory Short of San Francisco's internationally acclaimed 'wow' restaurant, Masa's, located in our sister property, Executive Hotel Vintage Court. We're thrilled to have Chef Short on board. As at Masa's, you'll find contemporary flavours married with classic French themes that pair brilliantly with our fine West Coast wines.

Now that we have your attention, and once you've wined and dined in La Vallée, 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: Columbia Valley, Washington

In 2007, the number of wineries in Washington State reached a whopping 500. The wines are available in every US state and in 40 countries around the world including Canada and right here in La Vallée. Of these 500 wineries, are in the Columbia Valley, which is due south. The Columbia Valley became an AVA—that means its an officially recognized American Viticultural Area—in 1984 making it the second oldest AVA in the state and Washington's largest grape-growing region covering almost 11 million acres (4,451,700 hectares). That's a full third of Washington State's landmass. While more than 17,000 vineyard acres (6,880 hectares) of grapes are planted there are only about 200 wineries, but plenty of growers who sell their grapes (merlot, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, Riesling and syrah) to wineries all over the state. Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills, Horse Heaven Hills, and both Yakima and Walla Walla Valleys are within Columbia Valley AVA borders.

Winery: Columbia Crest Winery

Part of the stable of wine giant St. Michelle's wineries, Columbia Crest, founded in 1983, is located in Horse Heaven Hills and is surrounded by 2,500 acres of vineyards. This acclaimed winery—"Best Winery for Value" Wine Spectator Reader's Choice Awards poll and Wine & Spirits' "Winery of the Year"—makes consistent quality and award-winning cabernet sauvignon, merlot, chardonnay, and semillon-chardonnay. In the years since it began, it's grown to be not only the largest single winery in Washington, but also one of the best selling premium wineries in America. The wines are food-friendly, combining easy elegance and immediate appeal, which is why we love them on our wine list.

Wine Wiz: Ray Einberger

In 1993, winemaker Ray Einberger, left his position as *Maître de Chai* for Napa Valley's Opus One to join Columbia Crest's chief winemaker Doug Gore and be on the pioneering front of Washington winemaking. Einberger took over as chief winemaker in 2003 and crafts superior-quality small-lot wines as well as affordable everyday wines. His mission? To deliver wines that beat expectations year after year. From what we've tasted, he's done that and more producing exceptional wines that over deliver at their price point.

Top Drops:

White: Columbia Crest Chardonnay 2004 This creamy Columbia Valley chardonnay is lush and complex, delivering lively lingering flavors of cantaloupe, green apple and caramel. Very drinkable on its own; divine with roast chicken or crab cakes.

Red: Columbia Crest Grand Estates Merlot 2002. This aromatic merlot, described as 'hedonistic' by some, is a lovely mish-mash of spice, blackberries, and chocolate. Its velvety, seductive finish has calling for another glass every time.

Cool Stuff:

Pacific Northwest Wining & Dining by Braiden Rex-Johnson
This cool new book highlights the best of the region's wineries complete with recipes galore and a few travel tips. It's lavishly illustrated with photos that put you in the vineyards, face to face with winemakers, and almost at the table with wine glass in hand. A truly delicious read.

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.

backward: An adjective used to describe

- a young, unevolved, closed, seriously undrinkable wine
- a wine that's not ready to drink

- a wine that simply refuses to divulge its charms or personality.

What's on?

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

November 2

3rd Annual "Undercover" Wine Tasting

Vancouver Rowing Club, Stanley Park, 7.30 p.m.

Proceeds to Shooting Stars Foundation

604-687-7792

www.shootingstarsfoundation.org

November 2

Pre-release tasting - Best of BC Fall 2007

A selection of B.C.'s best wines + cheeses + guest winemakers

39th & Cambie Liquor Store, 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.

604-660-9463

www.bcliquorstores.com/en/mattersoftaste/upcomingevents

November 4

Sunday School of Wine: Class #4 - Sparkling, Dessert and Fortified Wines

CRU Restaurant, 1459 West Broadway, 4-5.30 p.m.

604-677-4111

www.cru.ca

November 6

Winemaker's Dinner - Peller Estates Wineries

La Terrazza, 1088 Cambie Street, 7 p.m.

604-899-4449

www.laterrazza.ca

November 6

Fine Art, Fine Wine!

Harrison Galleries, 901 Homer St, Vancouver. 5.30-7.30 p.m.

Artist Michelle Kambolis + Ganton & Larsen Prospect Winery

www.harrisingalleries.com

November 7

5th Annual Slurp `n Swirl - Champagne & Oyster Event

Hosted by Joe Fortes, 777 Thurlow Street, 6 p.m.

Fundraiser for BC Professional Firefighters Burn Fund

604-669-1940

www.joefortes.ca

November 8 - 12

Cornucopia, Whistler's Celebration of Wine & Food

Four fabulous days and nights!

Dozens of fab wine and food events, dinners and parties

www.whistlercornucopia.com

November 8

Winemaker's Dinner - Township 7

Gramercy Grill, 2685 Arbutus Street, 6:30 p.m.

604-730-5666

www.township7.com

November 12

Winemaker's Dinner - Sandhill Small Lots with winemaker Howard

Soon

Aurora Bistro, 2420 Main Street, 7 p.m.

604-873-9944

www.aurorabistro.ca

November 13

Martinis & Manicures

La Vallée Restaurant & Lounge, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

An irresistible New York inspired, after-work monthly indulgence -

Martinis & Manicure (\$40)

November 13

Early Bird Tickets on sale TODAY

Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival 2008

(Ciao, Italia! February 25 to March 4)

604-872-6622

playhousewinefest.com

November 15th - 18th

11th Annual Clayoquot Oyster Festival

Multiple sites, Tofino

250-725-4222

www.oystergala.com

November 15

Lights, Camera, Cook!

Media celebrities + A-list Chefs + wine-pairings

Fabulous fundraiser at Terminal City Club, 6.30 p.m.
604-253-3022
www.gourmetwarehouse.ca