

If you haven't yet visited La Vallée Restaurant (www.lavalleerestaurant.com), our recently renovated, recreated, and renamed restaurant and lounge, you're overdue. And our secret is out. We were recently included in Vancouver Magazine's 2007 City Guide roundup of fine restaurants.

La Vallée's "contemporary wine country cuisine" is inspired by some of our amazing western wine regions—the Napa, Columbia and Okanagan Valleys. 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 involved in La Vallée, and 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 wine'd 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.

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 varietals (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 Gulf Islands

Just north of Washington State's San Juan Islands are B.C.'s Gulf Islands that happen to be more hospitable to growing grapevines than the slightly more southerly isles. This is important to know because in the 1850s, a dispute over the Canadian-US boundary which involved who'd get San Juan Island, came to be known as "The Pig War" when a Canadian pig—the war's only casualty—was killed by an American. As it turned out, America got San Juan Island and a few others and we Canadians got the Gulf Islands. Today there are eight wineries on six of them. The oldest is relatively young. Saturna Island Vineyards on Saturna Island with vineyards that run right down to the ocean's edge, dates back only to 1998. With the vagaries of island ferries, is not possible to visit them all in a single day. Three days or so would offer leisurely touring of these picturesque islands and tasting of characterful wines

Winery: Salt Spring Vineyards

No matter where it is, grape-growing country always seem to be a little bit of paradise. This one on bucolic Salt Spring Island, one of the Gulf Islands located between Vancouver and the mainland is no exception. It's the first winery on the Island and received its license in 2002, 30 minutes before nearby Garry Oaks Estate Winery. The wines have succeeded faster and better than the owners could have predicted, due in part to some very good wines (pinot noir, pinot blanc, pinot gris, blackberry port and a bubble called Morningstar. Another reason could be the fanciful, eye-catching labels that depict a voluptuous flying female caricature clad only in a diaphanous banner and red gumboots.

Wine Wiz: Paul Troop, Salt Spring Vineyards

Winemaker Paul Troop, Salt Spring Vineyards' intrepid grapemaster and grower, grew up in nearby Victoria, and leads a team of novice winemakers that includes owners Jan and Bill Harkely who have been studying at UC Davis. He has a number of experimental vineyards, on the go where he is trying different variations of grapes that have potential to make great wine in a cool climate including a cabernet foch-cross that makes big reds with lots of tannins.

Top Drops:

White: Salt Spring Vineyards Morning Star 2005

This tasty *méthode champenoise* bubble is blended from Island-grown pinot noir and chardonnay grapes. It's dry with tiny perfect bubbles, and "goes with anything!"

Red: Salt Spring Vineyards 2006 Blackberry Port

Made from organic, wild Salt Spring fruit reminiscent of the aroma and flavours of a warm summer's day on Salt Spring Island. Lovely on its own, drizzled on ice cream or a blackberry pavlova.

Cool Stuff:

Here are some quick and easy tips for pairing food and wine:

- Serve a dry rosé with hors d'oeuvres
- Serve an unoaked white with anything you can squeeze a lemon or lime on
- Try low-alcohol wines with spicy foods
- Match rich red meats with tannic reds
- With lighter meats, pair the wine with the sauce.
- Choose earthy wines with earthy foods
- For desserts, go with a lighter wine

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.

Aftertaste: This one is obvious—it's the taste left in the mouth after you've swallowed the wine—but it's also a synonym for length or finish. The longer the aftertaste lingers in the mouth (we're assuming that it was decent), the finer the quality of the wine.

What's on?

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

October 9

Martinis & Manicures

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

An irresistible New York inspired, after-work monthly indulgence – Martinis & Manicure (\$40)

October 11

Port and Chocolate Festival

The Vancouver Rowing Club, Stanley Park

7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

604-92503663

This 15th Annual Port and Chocolate Festival is a fundraiser for Amateur Sport @ VRC and showcases fabulous fortified wines and chocolate, chocolate, and more chocolate (\$29.99).

October 14

Sunday School of Wine at CRU

Cru Restaurant, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

1459 West Broadway

604-790-1511

Each class will include a fun, informative seminar, and a tasting of up to 8 wines, conducted by CRU owner and sommelier Mark Taylor. 1st Day ~How to taste wines ~Why do wines taste...

\$40 each, or \$140 for all four classes.

October 16

New Zealand - Pure Discovery

Vancouver Lawn Tennis & Badminton Club, 7- 9 p.m.

1630 West 15th Ave.

tastings@Southworldwine.com

Speaker is Mr. Brent Fraser. Brent is the Manager/Sommelier at The Observatory Restaurant on Grouse Mountain will lead a tasting of rare New Zealand wines. (\$55)

October 21

Languedoc Feria

Liberty Wine Cellar, 1- 3 p.m.

100-291 east 2nd Avenue, 604-925-3663

"Bob Style" Sunday Tasting Warm, Broad & Meaty and Authentique. A Harvest Festival of Deep Southern French Pleasures. Thirteen hearty reds. (\$24.99)

October 21

Sunday School of Wine at CRU

Cru Restaurant, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

1459 West Broadway

604-790-1511

~Aromatic Whites ~Explore Pinot Noir. Each class will include a fun,

informative seminar, and a tasting of up to 8 wines, conducted by CRU owner and sommelier Mark Taylor. (\$40)

October 22 & 23

Les Amis du Fromage Wine & Cheese Classes

1752 West 2nd Avenue, 7 – 9 p.m.

604-732-4218

Explore varieties of cheese from the many regions from France. This tasting with promises to highlight some of the best that France has to offer, and will include some classic cheese pairings with wines from the Loire, Alsace and Bordeaux. (\$65)