

If you haven't yet visited La Vallée Restaurant ([www.lavalleerestaurant.com](http://www.lavalleerestaurant.com)), our recently renovated, recreated, and renamed restaurant and lounge, you're overdue because our secret's out. We were recently included in Vancouver Magazine's 2007 City Guide roundup of fine restaurants. Do catch a few of summer's last remaining rays on La Vallée's prettily landscaped private patio, truly an urban oasis in the heart of the city.

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 you've wined and dined in La Vallée, you've likely noticed that all of us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park have a thing for West Coast wines. We've partnered with many of the 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. 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.

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### **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."

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### **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 Washington, Oregon and California. Ask for resident wine guru David Lancelot.  
1034 Davie Street, 604-684-2471,  
[www.marquis-wines.com](http://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](http://www.taylorwoodwines.com)

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## **Spotlight**

### **Wine Region: Vancouver Island**

Vancouver Island has 16 wineries so far, in a fairly concentrated area—just 200 acres are under vine. Four of the wineries are on the Saanich Peninsula, mere minutes from the BC Ferry Terminal, which is how most mainlanders get to the Island. The others are about 40-minutes up Island in the Cowichan Valley with a hardy few scattered a little further north. On the whole, growing conditions are hardly ideal but there's a happening microclimate in the Valley that makes grape growing pretty easy, that is, if you can outfox the destructive deer, rampaging birds, and occasional bears. The scenery is beyond idyllic with views from vineyards of endless fir-covered mountains, calm lakes, and occasional expanses of ocean. Because Islanders are fiercely loyal to 'home-grown', it's difficult to find these wines for sale although some do make it onto mainland restaurant wine lists.

### **Winery: Winchester Cellars**

This new Vancouver Island winery, located 20 minutes from downtown Victoria, makes some of the best handcrafted wines in British Columbia using prime Okanagan grapes and their own Island vineyard certified organic grapes. Winchester's pinot noir, chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, pinot gris, gewürztraminer, and meritage wines are highly sought after and are available only at the winery or select restaurants. (Now you have a very good excuse to ferry or fly to Southern Vancouver Island). The winery has stepped out beyond wines and currently makes an eau-de-viognier, grappa, and is about to embark on a range of small lot high-end spirits including single-malt whisky.

### **Wine Wiz: Ken Winchester**

"From wine what sudden friendships spring." And soon, the aforementioned spirits. Winemaker Ken Winchester has just installed a still after first traveling to Scotland to learn firsthand from some of the best. This former Californian made wine at his first winery in Paso Robles before immigrating to Canada with his Canadian wife—it's a known fact that Canadian women have married foreign winemakers bringing them home to Canada to immeasurably enrich our wine scene. And Winchester's have suitably wowed all tasters.

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## **Top Drops:**

### **White: Kettle Valley Chardonnay 2003, Okanagan Valley**

Some of the Naramata Bench's most consistent wines are from Kettle Valley meaning they're always in high demand, and sell out quickly. This well-made, full-flavoured KV chard is rich and toasty with a tasty mix of tropical fruit and baked apple. In a word, intense. The ultimate popcorn wine. Seriously. Try it.

### **Red: Mt. Boucherie Summit Reserve Pinot Noir 2004, Okanagan Valley**

This finely crafted pinot noir has enjoyed a serious run at being the belle of the ball judging by the raft of awards it's won. So what does everyone like about it? How about flavours of black cherries, cassis, and mocha, plus firm, sexy tannins, and a spicy finish? Excellent with grilled lamb chops and salmon.

### **Cool Stuff**

Did you know that lots of Canadian women have a penchant for foreign winemakers, marrying them and bringing them back home where they continue making excellent wines for many B.C. wineries? Who you ask? Australians John Simes at Mission Hill and Marcus Ansems of Therapy Vineyards, Californians Ken Winchester of Winchester Cellars and Tom Dibello of CedarCreek, and New Zealander Jeff Martin of La Frenz, to name a few. And then there are another dozen or so who have been attracted from New Zealand, Germany, France, South Africa....

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### **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.

**Varietal:** When the grape variety—chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, etc.—in the wine is named on the label, then it's called a varietal.

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### **What's on?**

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

September 16

**4th Annual Passions Gala Wine and Dine Fundraiser**

14 Top Chefs at Dr Peter Centre, 1110 Comox Street

Benefitting the Dr Peter AIDS Foundation. 6 p.m.  
604-331-3452

September 17

**Vive La France - Cheese & Wine Tasting**

les amis du FROMAGE, 1752 West 2nd Avenue, 7 p.m.  
604-732-4218

September 18<sup>t</sup>

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604-732-4218

September 18

**Australian Regional Heroes Tasting**

Hosted by Wine Australia, 6.30 p.m.  
Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street  
604-280-4444

September 20

**3rd Annual Chef Meets Grape**

Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street, 7 p.m.  
"Small plates" by 12 restaurants + BC VQA wines  
[www.winebc.com](http://www.winebc.com)

September 20

**Tasting - Gulf Island Wines**

Taylorwood Wines, 4.30-6.30 p.m.  
1185 Mainland Street

September 25

**Wines of Chile - Fall Festival Tour**

Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street, 7 p.m.  
Proceeds to BC Hospitality Foundation.  
[www.bchospitalityfoundation.com/chile.aspx](http://www.bchospitalityfoundation.com/chile.aspx)

September 27

**Tasting - Late Harvest Wines**

Taylorwood Wines, 4.30-6.30 p.m.  
1185 Mainland Street

September 28 to October 7

**27th Okanagan Fall Wine Festival**

165+ events, throughout the Okanagan Valley

250-861-6654

[www.TheWineFestivals.com](http://www.TheWineFestivals.com)

September 28 to 30

**3rd Annual Cowichan Wine & Culinary Festival**

Three amazing days and nights, showcasing wineries, farms and restaurants of the Cowichan Valley, Vancouver Island

1-888-303-3337

[wines.cowichan.net](http://wines.cowichan.net)