

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. And our secret is out. We were recently included in Vancouver Magazine's 2007 City Guide roundup of fine restaurants. Don't miss the shaded, prettily landscaped adjoining 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, 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.

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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 the West Coast. 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: The Fraser Valley**

When Vancouverites want to visit a few wineries, they've merely got to hop in their cars and in about 40 minutes they're in bucolic farm country and set for an easy loop round five ace wineries within minutes of each other. So as not to get looped in the process, most people spit (very important). Or better yet, bribe a DD (designated driver) with a really good lunch at Domaine de Chaberton Estate Winery's French bistro. Others worthy of a look in and tasting? Award-winning Township 7, the Fort Wine Company (superb fruit wines), Glenugie Winery (this one's organic), and Lotusland Vineyards (The name? Eastern Canada thinks we laid-back West Coasters live in Lotus Land).

### **Winery: Mission Hill Family Estate Winery**

Frequent visits to this celebrated Okanagan Valley winery established in 1981, continue to awe as we've watched it grow from architects' drawings to realized mission-style winery complete with bell tower. It's a given that the wines live up to the grandeur of their surroundings. In fact when California wine legend Robert Mondavi visited a few years ago he told Mission Hill's founder Anthony von Mandl that he'd "out-Mondavied" him. A tremendous compliment from the master since the Robert Mondavi Winery is recognized as the benchmark for not just California, but North American wineries. Mission Hill's fleet of wines—including many award-winners—ranges from pinot blanc, pinot grigio, sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, merlot, cabernet sauvignon, syrah and more in several tiers to Oculus, Mission Hill's flagship Bordeaux red. The 2003 vintage of this mighty wine, the best to date, bears famed French wine consultant Michel Roland's touch.

### **Wine Wiz: John Simes**

New Zealand-born John Simes made wine in his home country and around the world before settling in at Mission Hill in 1992 where he crafts some of the finest wines in North America. How good? He's won two gold medals at the prestigious London International Wine & Spirits Competition, one in 1994 for the best Chardonnay and the first in 1990 for his New Zealand Montana Sauvignon Blanc. He continues to oversee Mission Hill's extensive vineyards and winemaking team, producing fine Okanagan wines, many of which are sold throughout North America and in Europe.

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## **Top Drops:**

### **White: Mission Hill Family Reserve Chardonnay 2004, Okanagan Valley**

This ripe chard is bursting with tropical fruit, nectarines, and grapefruit and delivers elegant, crisp, and fresh flavours. It's a little spicy, nice and creamy, and a natch with popcorn (really!), crab cakes, scrambled eggs, charcuterie, pork...

### **Red: Mission Hill Family Estate Pinot Noir 2005, Okanagan Valley**

This tasty, nicely textured pinot noir evokes smoke, vanilla, cinnamon, and cherries. It's well made and seriously enjoyable. Drink on its own or pair with Gouda, walnuts, mushrooms, lentils, duck, salmon....

## **Cool Stuff**

Did you know ...

That there are many different bottle sizes (or formats as we wine-geeks call them) out there. The largest ones are very rare.

**Split** - made only for sparkling wine; 187ml or a quarter of a standard bottle.

**Piccolo** - same as a split

**Half bottle** - half a standard size bottle or 375ml

**Bottle** - you know this one—a standard sized bottle or 750ml

**Magnum** - 2 standard bottles or 1.5 litres

**Double magnum** - 4 standard bottles or 3 liters.

**Jeraboam** - 4 standard bottles or 3 litres bottles

**Rehoboam** - 6 bottles or 4.5 litres

**Imperial** - 8 bottles or 6 litres

**Methusaleh** - same as Imperial; 8 bottles or 6 litres

**Salmanazar** - a case of wine all poured into a single bottle; it's 9 litres or 12 bottles

**Balthazar** - 16 bottles or 12 litres

**Nebuchadnezzar** - 20 bottles or 15 litres

**Sovereign** - you'll need a helper or two to open one of these big beauts; 33 1/3 bottles or 25 litres

**Primat** - 36 bottles or 27 litres

**Melchizedek** - 40 bottles or 30 litres

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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.

**Meritage:** Rhymes with heritage. Pronounce it right and you'll get respect, say it wrong and guffaws are guaranteed. This term was coined in California and is what West Coast wineries call their Bordeaux-style blends. The wines must be a blend of three of the five Bordeaux grapes: cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, and petit verdot.

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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 9

#### **Vancouver Feast of Fields**

UBC Farms

B.C. wine and beer and tastes from some of the city's best restaurants in a bucolic outdoor setting

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

September 13

#### **The Flavours of Italy Wine Tasting**

Sinclair Centre, 757 West Hastings Street

Taste more than 100 different Italian wines paired with first class Italian food products

604-682-1410

September 14

#### **3rd Annual Gracious Grape Wine Tasting**

Vancouver Public Library, 8 p.m.

Benefiting the Vancouver Sun Raise-a-Reader campaign

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

September 15

#### **Bordeaux Release & Tasting**

Marquis Wine Cellars, 1034 Davie Street, 9 - 11 a.m.

Tasting ends and doors open to general sales at 11 a.m.

604-684-0445

[www.marquis-wines.com](http://www.marquis-wines.com)

September 18

#### **Australia's Regional Heroes**

Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street, 6:30 p.m.

Experience the regional differences of Australia's regional "wines from somewhere, rather than just anywhere." Over 250 wines from 45 wineries are being poured.

Ticketmaster: 604-280-4444

September 20

**3rd Annual Chef Meets Grape**

Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street, 7 p.m.

A dozen hot restaurant chefs prepares delectable tastes to mix it up with the fall release BC VQA wines.

Tickets from Taylorwood Wines, 1185 Mainland Street, 604-408-9463\_

September 25

**Wines of Chile, Fall Festival**

Rocky Mountaineer Station, 1755 Cottrell Street, 7 p.m.

Discover the diversity and delicate flavours of Chile's fabulous wines by tasting through more than 200 of them. Food and music will keep you on your feet.