

Straight from the VINE

Behind every great winery there's a good story.

by Linda Barrett

Virginia has some superb wines and some fabulous wineries. Yet most of the people behind the wineries did not set out to be winemakers. They were entrepreneurs running their own businesses, government workers, and doctors. But what they all shared is a desire to return to the simpler life. Each of our state's 209 wineries has a unique story.

Wine Paired with Music™

On their first date, Shannon and Stephen Mackey decided to open a winery together. Nine days later, they purchased the land where Notaviva Vineyards now stands. Well, they did know each other from college, but re-met about 10 years later, and that's when sparks flew.

But it wasn't easy. As fate decided, they chose their timberframe home plan, started clearing, and found out they were pregnant all at the same time. And if that wasn't enough, they responded to and won an HGTV contest to film construction for the Dream House series.

For the next 15 months, the film crew integrated into their lives. "We planted vines, commuted, left our jobs, had babies, and launched our own creative agency as HGTV filmed our progress," Stephen explains.

Both Mackeys were music engineers touring with noted bands and entertainment groups, so they knew the winery's theme had to involve music. Today, Notaviva is a hub of musical activity with professionals and novices alike coming together to enjoy good wine and music.

Uniquely, Notaviva's wine labels say, "Best Paired with Music." Guests enjoy blind pairings, matching music to the wines. Cantabile Cabernet Franc goes well with a string quartet, for example, and Calor Chardonnay goes best with Latin Jazz.

- Best Seller: 2009 Ludwig Meritage. Enjoy the September 22nd "Vineyard Games."

A Taste of the Old Country

In 1919, Doukenie Bacos emigrated to New York from Greece, carrying her mandolin. She was only 15, but knew she wanted to be a doctor and to have a winery, like her father. She didn't end up a doctor, but the three generations to follow did.

She did, however, get her winery. In 1985, Doukenie's grandson Charles Bazaco opened Doukenie Winery, one of the oldest vineyards in the area.

In 2007, the winery was small and the wine average, but Bazaco wanted to become a destination winery. They increased their production quality, bought barrels from France, and hired noted winemaker Sebastien Marquet, who adapted the old-world techniques to our unique climate.

"My goal is to make the best wine in Virginia," Marquet says. He spent years studying winemaking in Burgundy, France, and making wine in Martinique, training that helps with our Northern Virginia humidity.

Now, 60% of Doukenie's wines are sold through club membership, with the rest sold through the winery. Visitors enjoy their recent expansion: Friday night wood-fired pizzas, and Maria Canora's Tuscan cooking classes.

- Best Sellers: Cabernet Franc and Mandolin. Note Doukenie's mandolin on each label and her portrait in the tasting room. Enjoy the September 22nd "Taste of Italy."

A Family Affair

When Bob and Carol Hauck first married, they lived in a small apartment above an Italian family who made wine in their basement. Bob chipped in to help with the winemaking and a love began.

Early on, Bob hired a young man to work on his farm, whose father was an original local winemaker. Bob couldn't pass up the chance to help in their vineyards. He enjoyed it so much that he enrolled in wine classes at UC Davis and Virginia Tech, hired a young winemaker from France who was studying for her Master's Degree in Oenology (the study of wine and winemaking), and opened Lost Creek Winery on July 4, 2002.

While on a plane trip, Carol spotted a metal building in the Sky Mall Magazine and thought, 'We can start with this.' "We've been disguising it ever since," she laughs. They built the Tuscan-themed winery and tasting room themselves, with the help of friends.

- Best Seller: Vidal Blanc. 10th anniversary July 4, 2012.

The next thing you know, Bob and Carol's son, Eric Hauck, decided he'd like his own winery. "One night he said he wanted to look at a property, and in a half hour, called to say he bought the place," Carol explains. "It's not far from here," Eric said, "and we paid full price ... but all the equipment comes with the place!"

"When we asked where it was, we found out it was the property right next door to ours and the equipment was also ours!" Eric opened Hidden Brook Winery the same year.

Eric and Deborah Hauck also built their winery themselves in a log cabin style. "We purchased the logs from British Columbia and the company notched them; then we put it up ourselves in two weeks," Deborah says. "We're near our in-laws, but we each have our own style."

- Best Seller: Chambourcin. 10th anniversary September 2012.

Mediterranean Promise

When Bora Baki was 59 he wanted to retire. He had emigrated to America from Izmir, Turkey, and had already opened and ran ten businesses. But his younger son Kerem called from college saying, "Dad, I'm taking a class called 'Drink Wine.'" He did so well, he received an invitation from the professor to join the Oenology Program at Virginia Tech. Following his internship, he told his father he wanted to open a winery.

"I told Kerem that if he finished school, I'd buy a piece of property and we'd grow grapes and make wine," Bora explains. "He kept his promise and I kept mine."

It's been 11 years now that the Mediterranean-style Hillsborough Vineyards has been open and the entire family is still involved, including Kerem and his new wife Asli, and a grandson.

"My grandson is the 'sniffer,'" Bora says. "When they're young, they have a virgin nose and can distinguish smells. He helps with the tasting notes on each wine."

"I named our first wine after my Mom, whose nickname was Ruby, so we started with gemstone names," Bora explains. "We took birth months and came up with Opal and Garnet. For Bloodstone, I used the name of a very nice red ring I brought with me from Turkey."

- Best Sellers: Opal and Bloodstone. 8000 cases per year.

Health and Happiness

"About 35 years ago, I decided I would get into agriculture at some point, but it wasn't until my wife Holli was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000 that I got the kick in the pants I needed to actually make it happen," explains John Todhunter, a PhD biochemist.

"I took Holli out looking at property to distract her, and the day we visited this property, we saw three foxes, so we named our winery Three Fox Vineyards." It opened in 2005 and now has 14 acres producing vines. It was the first winery in Northern Virginia to plant Sangiovese vines.

Visitors enjoy a walking tour of the Tuscan-themed winery and several festivals, including the Lucy Stomp and the Feast of San Gennaro festival in September each year.

"For our Lucy Stomp, we cut down six barrels, put about 20 pounds of grapes in each, and have two-person teams compete in 1.5-minute heats to see how many cups of juice they can produce. We also have an I Love Lucy-themed costume contest where people dress like Lucy, Ethel, Fred, and Ricky," John says.

- Best Sellers: Gatto Bianco and Alouette Cabernet Franc.

What's Old Is New

John Hickox's passion is history, starting in childhood when he'd search for Civil War artifacts and Indian arrowheads in his Fairfax neighborhood. But who knew that one day he would purchase 21 acres in a location ripe with history and open The Winery at Bull Run?

The area's newest winery opened June 2, 2012.

"When a friend told me about this place for sale, I wasn't interested at the time. But in 2008, the price dropped and it suddenly became that once-in-a-lifetime deal," Hickox explains. "I wasn't even sure what to do with it, but since the Manassas Battlefield is our neighbor on two sides, I thought it might eventually be a good place for a museum, a B&B, or a winery."

The more he learned about the property, the more excited he became. General Sherman stood here as a brigade commander taking incoming artillery, and visitors can still see the Entwisle house ruins with soldiers' inscriptions on them, the smokehouse, barn, and old split rail fence that harken back 150 years in time. "I ended up falling in love with the place," he says.

He still finds Civil War artifacts on the property to this day, and created large cases to display items picked up at Manassas; cannonballs, Union and Confederate buttons, buckles and breastplates, and countless other artifacts, along with their stories.

"My wife says I finally have somewhere to put my collections," he quips.

- Best Seller: Delaney, named for their daughter. Enjoy events surrounding the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Second Manassas, August 25, 2012.

What Makes our Area so Great for Wineries?

"If you look in our Virginia Winery Guide, you see the fat blue line of Skyline Drive. That eastern slope of the Blue Ridge is the sweet spot for Virginia wineries," explains Annette Boyd, director of the Virginia Wine Board. "It gives a little elevation to protect from disease, catches the breezes to protect vines from spring frosts, and gets full morning sun."

Wine is experiencing explosive growth in Virginia due to several factors that parallel the national level. First, wine is one of the fastest growing categories in the U.S. currently. Americans are perceiving wine as a healthy beverage and an extension of food. Second, we are following the trend of the "buy local" movement, rolling over from food into drink.

"There is also a growing trend back to more Old World-style wine flavors, like those of Germany, Italy, Spain and France. Because of our climate and soil, our style is closer to those regions than California is," she says. "The Old World Style wines are lower in alcohol, and go better with food."

Virginia is now the fifth-largest wine producer in the United States.

One Winery at a Time

There is also a growing trend in agritourism, as reflected by Mark and Gwen Stockman. Their goal is to visit all 209 Virginia wineries, and since relocating from Atlanta in 2011, they have visited 76 wineries so far. "We want to get to them all," Mark says. At the time, they were tasting at Tarara Vineyards.

To track their progress, they use the yearly Virginia Winery Guide and circle wineries they've visited. "We write our tasting notes on Post-its and stick them to the back of the bottle, like, 'This one is a little sweeter and might go nicely with a pork dish.'" They have over 100 bottles of Virginia wine already at home, ready to share with friends and family.

"We don't go to wine festivals; we want to go to the place where the wine is made," he continues. "We really enjoy the casual and approachable atmosphere we have found universally in all the vineyards at the tasting bar. You can just start talking to the people next to you—people you haven't met before—and everyone has a good time together."

Create your own story and enjoy Virginia's bountiful wine country.

Notaviva Vineyards

13274 Sagle Road, Purcellville, VA 20132
www.notavivavineyards.com

Doukenie Winery

14727 Mountain Road, Purcellville, VA 20132
www.doukeniewinery.com

Lost Creek Winery

43277 Spinks Ferry Road, Leesburg, VA 20176
www.lostcreekwinery.com

Hidden Brook Winery

43301 Spinks Ferry Road, Leesburg, VA 20176
www.hiddenbrookwinery.com

Hillsborough Vineyards

36716 Charles Town Pike, Purcellville, VA 20132
www.hillsboroughwine.com

Three Fox Vineyards

10100 Three Fox Lane, Delaplane, VA 20144
www.threefoxvineyards.com

The Winery at Bull Run

15950 Lee Highway, Centreville, VA 20120
www.wineryatbullrun.com

Virginia Wine Board

www.virginiawine.org