



**July 30, 2010**

**Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry**



**Todd P. Haymore**

I wanted to share with you a few notes from the Governor's and my successful trade mission to Europe. In part, the purpose of our trip was to highlight Virginia wines in the United Kingdom, promote increased sales there, and attract more winery tourism to Virginia. The UK is currently the largest wine importing country in the world - \$8 billion worth every year - and by whatever measure, I am confident that our mission was a success.

Five Virginia wineries felt so strongly about this effort and the opportunity to increase sales to the UK that they paid their own way to be a part of the mission and participate in several major events where Virginia wines were featured. Virginia wines were featured at six events where either the Governor, the First Lady, and/or I were the guests. Over these six events, more than 500 people sampled Virginia wines, most for the first time. You'll also be pleased to know that the wines were also paired with Virginia pork and seafood products, two other products that the Governor and I were promoting in the UK. We also served Virginia gourmet peanuts at the events, and I had more than a few folks tell me how much they enjoyed them.

I am quite proud to state that the wines were very well received throughout the mission. Rather than me paraphrasing for you what was shared with the mission group, I'm pleased to share a single quote from an email I received from an individual who attended a Virginia wine reception hosted by McGuireWoods on London's legendary Pall Mall street:

"Resplendent in my best Virginia planter's kit I made a very thorough round of the exhibitors, sampling as I went. The conclusion I reached was unequivocal: delicious. Really excellent,

actually, especially the reds. So I'm a willing and grateful convert - and what a relief to have an alternative to the Californian product!"

What a great quote, one that I believe accurately captures the essence of what the wineries, the Governor, the First Lady, and I heard throughout the trade mission.

Let me share with you a few other standout moments from the mission:

Among the six receptions, our friends at the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) hosted an event that focused on promoting Virginia wines and tourism to Virginia wineries. The event was emceed by Oz Clarke, a world-renowned wine writer who has traveled to Virginia several times and has been a champion of Virginia wines in the UK as well as the future of the Virginia wine industry in general. A number of UK and European wine writers attended the event and will be writing articles about their tastings. A special thanks goes to Alisa Bailey and the VTC staff who worked so hard to make this event special and fun for the wineries, the Governor, the First Lady, and me.

The mission also achieved increased sales of Virginia wines as an immediate result of our visit. A leading UK importer/distributor of Virginia wines - New Horizon Wines - took these orders during the events or shortly thereafter. A number of Virginia wineries, the Governor, the Wine Marketing Office, VTC, and I are working with Chris Parker and New Horizon Wines on the strategic development of an international wine marketing strategy. This also includes Virginia wine tourism. This effort is currently focused on the UK; however, we'll be working to take this strategic international marketing development plan beyond the UK in the future.

After selling Virginia wines over the last year, Whole Foods now has a specific Virginia wines section at its four-story Kensington-High Street location. Because of the sales and the attention that our wines have received since hitting the racks, the store believed that Virginia wines merited a stand alone section rather than being mixed in with other US wines.

The Governor and I met with the Whole Foods UK Region President during the mission and, in addition to other items we discussed, we thanked him for highlighting Virginia wines in one of London's most heavily trafficked areas.

I hope this gives you a small taste of our efforts on behalf of Virginia wine in the UK. All this, of course, is just the start - the Governor, the First Lady, the Wine Marketing Office, VTC, and I look forward to continuing our work with Virginia wineries in the hope of growing business opportunities in the UK and beyond in the future.

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