

MOVE OVER, NAPA VALLEY

Region's wineries have become ambassadors for the region

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM
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In the past few years, the vineyards in northern Michigan, particularly those in Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties, have deservedly earned a growing reputation as being producers of world-class wine.

Wine aficionados, connoisseurs and vintners worldwide are taking note of the Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cab Franc, Pinot Grigio and other wines that have been winning awards in regional and international competitions.

Dan Berger, a syndicated wine columnist and a recognized wine authority, recently visited the Leelanau Peninsula, which is home to 10 different wineries that, together, make up the Leelanau Peninsula Vintners

Association (LPVA). After experiencing what they offered, he said he felt he had stumbled upon one of the best-kept secrets in the wine industry.

"They are certainly producing wines of distinction and quality," said Berger. "Leelanau Peninsula wine-makers are definitely showing an aggressive and courageous approach to wine-making technique, and that is reflected in the bottle."

In addition to the 10 wineries in Leelanau County, four others operate on Old Mission Peninsula. Those four organized in 2002 as a Wine Trail entitled Wineries of Old Mission Peninsula (WOMP). Their motto is "Four unique wineries, one destination."

Liz Berger of Chateau Chantal, a winery and B & B that is celebrating its 10th

anniversary, said that organizing under this banner has advantages for both the public and the vintner.

"It ultimately makes it easier for the consumer to think of the region as a wine trail, rather than one individual winery. It's just another tool to navigate the area."

Michigan has 13,500 acres of vineyards, making the state the fourth largest for grape growing, but what makes Leelanau and Grand Traverse unique in this equation is the microclimate here, combined with being located on the 45th Parallel. The region has long been hailed for its excellent agricultural conditions, and the latest tradition has become the grape harvest.

There are several ways to enjoy local wines. The first is to visit the wineries themselves and taste their prod-



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Good Harbor Vineyard begins regular hours Memorial Day.

ucts. Whether you visit one tasting room or stretch it into a day-long tour, sampling, buying and traveling is the way to learn the most about individual wineries and their products. Most also have Web sites, which allow for virtual touring.

The wines can also be found in area wine shops, gourmet delis and grocery stores, and nearly every restaurant in the region that serves wine has a section dedicated to those made locally that are available

either by the glass or bottle. Ask the wineries about or check out information on Web sites regarding special promotions, events and packages. From wine weekends to events such as the Harvest Stompede in the fall, there are ways to transform the appreciation of wine into a memorable activity.

"We are clearly an industry on the rise," says Rick Coates of the LPVA. "We're more than makers of quality wines; we're also ambassadors to the tourism industry."

Local wineries and vineyards

Bel Lago Vineyards and Winery

Located north of Cedar on County Rd. 643 (South Lake Shore Drive). Open from noon-6 p.m. daily. 6530 South Lake Shore Drive, Cedar; 228-4800, Ext. 102.

Boskydel Vineyards

Located at the corner of Otto Road and County Road 641. Open daily from 1-6 p.m. 7501 E. Otto, Lake Leelanau; 256-7272.

Bowers Harbor Vineyards

Located on the Old Mission Peninsula. Open weekends December through April; May through October 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon-6 p.m. Sunday. 2896 Bowers Harbor Road, Traverse City; 223-7615.

Chateau Chantal

Twelve miles north

of Traverse City on the Old Mission Peninsula. Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday (11 a.m.-8 p.m. mid-June through August) and Sunday from noon-5 p.m. 15900 Rue de Vin, Traverse City; 223-4110.

Chateau Fontaine

Open Wednesday through Sunday, noon-5 p.m. June-October and noon-5 p.m. weekends November, December and May. 2290 S. French Road, Lake Leelanau; 256-0000.

Chateau Grand Traverse, Ltd.

At the winery eight miles north on M-37 on the Old Mission Peninsula, 12239 Center Road, Mon.-Sat. 10-7, Sunday noon-6. 223-7355. Also, three tasting rooms: Downtown Traverse City, Mon.-Wed. and Sat. 10-6, Thurs.-Fri. 10-8, Sunday noon-5. In Acme next to the Stained Glass Cabinet Co., Mon.-Sat., 10-7, Sunday noon-6.

Chateau de Leelanau

In barn at

Hilltop Road and M-22, Suttons Bay. Open Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday noon-5 p.m. Suttons Bay, 49682; 271-8888.

Cicccone Vineyard and Winery

Located eight miles north of Traverse City on Hilltop Road off M-22. Open noon-6 p.m. daily. 10343 E. Hilltop Road, Suttons Bay; 271-5551.

Good Harbor Vineyards

Located three miles south of Leland on M-22 behind Manitou Farm Market and Bakery. May 20 through Nov. 1 hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. R. 1, Box 888, Lake Leelanau; 256-7165.

Leelanau Wine Cellars

Located in Omena on the east side of the Leelanau Peninsula, between Suttons Bay and Northport. May through October hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through

Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. 12683 East Tatch Road, P.O. Box 68, Omena; 386-5201.

Leorie Vineyard

6994 Peninsula Dr., Traverse City; 933-1133.

L. Mawby Vineyards/Winery

On Elm Valley Road south of Suttons Bay (take M-22 to Hilltop Road to S. Elm Valley Road.). Year-round hours of operation: May, Sept. and Oct. open noon through 6 p.m. Thursday through Sunday; June, July and Aug. open daily noon to 6 p.m.; Nov. through April open Saturdays only from noon to 5 p.m., 4519 S. Elm Valley Road, Suttons Bay; 271-3522.

Peninsula Cellars

Located at the corner of Center and Carroll roads on Old Mission Peninsula. Tasting hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon-6 p.m. Sunday. 11480 Center Road, Old Mission; 933-9787.

Raftshol Vineyards

Located 2 1/2

miles north of Suttons Bay on M-22. Open daily from noon-6 p.m. 1865 NW Bayshore Drive, Suttons Bay; 271-5650.

Shady Lane Cellars

Located on the Leelanau Peninsula between Traverse City and Suttons Bay. Tasting hours are noon-6 p.m. daily May through October, or by appointment. 9580 Shady Lane, Suttons Bay; 947-8865.

The Winery at Black Star Farm

On Revold Rd. 12 miles north of Traverse City (take M-22 to Revold; winery is first driveway on left). June through October tasting hours are 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon. through Sat. and noon-6 p.m. Sun. 10844 E. Revold Road, Suttons Bay, 49682; 271-4884.

Willow Vineyards

On Hilltop Rd. south of Suttons Bay (take M-22 to Hilltop). Open May through October from noon-6 p.m. Wed.-Sun. 10702 E. Hilltop Road, Suttons Bay; 271-4810.