

# Wine festivals offer fun and opportunity to try new local wines

BY DICK ALLEN

Wine festivals are growing in popularity across the country and Michigan is no exception. In fact, northern Michigan now has eight wine festivals, double from last year. These festivals attract thousands of participants eager to learn about and enjoy locally made wine from grapes grown in the area.

The popularity of these festivals stems from the ability of the participants to sample wines in moderation from several different wineries. Most festivals have between 12 and 20 wineries present, with winemakers and other winery staff on hand to answer questions.

In addition to wine, these festivals feature regional cuisine prepared by locally owned restaurants. The food is often served in appetizer portions, giving the participant the opportunity to sample several items and pair them up with the wine. Chefs are often on hand preparing these foods in front of attendees, adding additional flavor to the festival.

Each wine festival has its own character and personality. Many have music, some offer jazz while others offer blues or soft rock. Some festivals have beer; hand-crafted, locally made micro-brewed beers, while others have artists displaying their works. Many of the northern Michigan festivals are at

harbors or near water.

While each festival is unique, they all have a common denominator — fun. Ask anyone who attends, because more than likely, they will be bringing others with them next year, maybe you. But don't wait for an invitation from your friends, with nine wine festivals in the next year there is plenty of opportunity to seek one out on your own.

## LELAND WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL

JUNE 14, *Leland Harbor*

If you live in or near Leland, summer starts the second Saturday of June with the Leland Wine & Food Festival. This is the 18th year that organizers from the Leland business community have put the festival on.

It all started when Kathy Telgard and her husband Chris, who were partners in the Bluebird Restaurant, started talking about ways to get more people to come to Leland.

"We wanted to beef up what was traditionally a slow weekend in Leland," said Kathy Telgard, co-chair of the festival with her husband. "Memorial Day Weekend was always busy, but then there was this lull for a few weeks so we started talking to others in the business community about a wine festival."

Why a wine festival?

"We had been out to Napa Valley in the early '80s to some wine festivals and they were a lot of fun," said Telgard. "We were friends with Larry Mawby (L. Mawby Vineyards) and Bruce Simpson (Good Harbor Vineyards) and felt they were making great wine and wanted to help them out."

What the Telgard's didn't realize at first was how much work and money a wine festival costs.

"We had no idea about any of this. We applied for a grant from the newly formed Michigan Grape & Wine Industry Council and got it (the festival received the first ever grant from the MG&WIC)," said Telgard. "We had about 1,000 people the first year and now we are up over 3,000 — we could probably do more but we have space limitations at the harbor."

The popularity of the festival has people lining up a couple of hours before the gates open at Noon and the festival remains busy until the end at 6 pm. This years Leland Wine & Food Festival will feature 111 wineries from the Leelanau Peninsula, three from Old Mission and one from the southwest part of Michigan.

Several restaurants including The Cove, The Riverside and The Bluebird will all be back, along with regional favorites Stonehouse Bread and the Leelanau Cheese Company.



Photo/Michigan Grape & Wine Industry Council

Ron Getz and his band The Heaters will perform all afternoon with special guest Dawn Campbell.

Another popular attraction to the festival is the commemorative Leland Wine & Food Festival poster. The poster will be on sale and the artist, Mary Fuscaldo, will be on hand from noon till 3 p.m. to sign.

Just how long will the Telgard's continue the festival?

"It is a lot of work and fortunately Chris and I have a lot of help," said Telgard. "We see this going on forever, the big challenge for us right now is the cost of putting the festival on is going way up."

Festival organizers learned that their liability insurance is doubling in price this year (insurance rates for all special events went up this year). In addition the cost of their tent rental quadrupled making it a challenge to keep the festival profitable.

"We had to raise the price to \$8 because of all these additional costs," said Telgard. "We didn't want to but we had to because of the extra \$5,000 in expenses this year."

The Leland Business Council that sponsors the festival uses proceeds from the event to help fund beautification projects in downtown Leland.

"We also make a donation the Leland Schools Parents Association," said Telgard. "They provide us with all of the volunteers that day to help pour wine."

Tickets for the Leland Wine & Food Festival are \$8 and available at the event only. Participants will receive a wine festival glass and two tasting tickets. Additional tasting tickets are \$2 each. Wine samples require 1 to 3

tickets depending on the cost of the wine. For additional information on the festival call (231) 256-7747.

## BAY HARBOR CONOURS D'ELEGANCE FOOD & WINE EXPERIENCE

JUNE 21, *Bay Harbor*

There is no rest for those on the wine festival trail because right after the Leland Wine & Food Festival comes a brand new wine festival at Bay Harbor outside of Petoskey. The festival will be part of the famed Concours d'Elagance that features and invitational show of vintage and classic cars, boats, motorcycles and even float planes from all over the country.

"Good wine and food are integral to the lifestyles of our entrants and audience," said David Draper, chairman of Bay Harbor Concours d'Elegance. "We want to give those who come to Concours another reason to spend time enjoying the whole day. More importantly we wish to promote the local wineries of the Leelanau and Old Mission Peninsulas."

The "Food & Wine Experience" begins at 11 am and runs till 4 pm. Tickets are \$25 a piece with proceeds benefiting the Northern Michigan Hospital Foundation. Each ticket includes a wine glass and 8 tasting tickets good for wine and food.

In addition there will be a series of 30 to 45 minute presentations on the basics of wine, cheese, olive oil and bread; talks from Larry Mawby, Don Coe and a presentation on regional specialty foods. For additional information visit: [www.bayharborconcours.com](http://www.bayharborconcours.com) or call (231) 588-2150.



Photo/Michigan Grape & Wine Industry Council