

All year: Mon-Sat 11-5, Sun 1-5 *plus...*

Jul/Aug: Mon-Sat 11-6:00

Sep/Oct: Fri-Sat 11-6:00

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FENN Valley

VINEYARDS AND WINE CELLAR

August/September 2011

For those who may have forgotten...
I-196 to exit 34 (between Holland & South Haven). East on M-89 at Exit 34 for 3½ mi to 62nd St. South (right) on 62nd 1 mi to 122nd Ave. Left on 122nd ¼mi. Winery on right. *Follow the signs.*

<http://www.fennvalley.com>

Two Fenn Valley Wines Win Best In Class

On August 2, 2011, two dozen judges from across the country assembled at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, Michigan to judge wines at the Michigan Wine and Spirits Competition. There were 367 wines from 53 wineries entered into seven categories: Dry White Wine, Dry Red Wine, Fruit Wine, Dessert Wine, Rose, Sparkling, and Semi Dry White Wine. Fenn Valley took home two Best In Class trophies: one for our Capriccio in the Dry Red Wine category and one for our 2010 Riesling in the Semi-Dry White Wine Category.

A Gold Medal Reception was held on August 4 at the Kellogg's Center. Chefs from the State Room expertly paired the winning wines with different foods while winery representatives and the public mingled together in celebration of another great year for the Michigan wine industry.

Capriccio is the winery's best-selling red wine because of its fruit characteristics and smooth drinkability. A blend of Chambourcin, Chancellor, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot, Capriccio is a great wine for almost any occasion and pairs especially well with spaghetti and red sauce or lamb chops.

The 2010 Riesling was produced from 100% Riesling grapes. Last September, the weather was incredibly dry, which allowed for a noble rot to grow on much of our Riesling crop. Although this may sound like a

bad thing, the rot produced a strong flavor of apricot, helping the Riesling gain a unique and fruity flavor, earning it Best In Class. *You will find more on our Riesling's story on page 3.*

The trophies are displayed in the Fennville tasting room, along-side their respective wines. Other than these two exciting titles, the winery also received gold, silver, and bronze medals for other wines. This year we have earned the right to use our slogan "Growing Award-Winning Wines Since 1973."

Both wines are available for tasting and purchasing at our Fennville and Saugatuck tasting rooms. Come on in and check out what judges believe to be some of the best wines in the state.



The winemaking crew holding best of class awards

New Barn on the Farm

Some of you may have noticed that we have begun constructing a new building here on the farm and wondered what we were planning on using it for. Upon receiving a grant from the government, we are erecting a new barn which will be used primarily for storing specialized farm equipment. It is being built right next to the large red barn located on the north side of 122nd Avenue. The construction, which began in early August has progressed quickly and will be wrapping up by the beginning of September, just in time for the 2011 harvest.



Recent Awards

Vintage 2011

<u>WINE</u>	MICHIGAN WINE AND SPIRITS	INT'L EASTERN WINE COMPETITION	OCC GREAT LAKES GREAT WINE	TASTER'S GUILD INT'L WINE JUDGING	FINGER LAKES INT'L COMPETITION
<i>Cab Franc 2010</i>	S	B		S	
<i>Capriccio</i>	G*				
<i>Dry Riesling 2010</i>	S	GG		S	B
<i>Late Harv Vignoles 2010</i>	S		G	S	
<i>Meritage 2009</i>	G	S	B	S	
<i>Merlot 2009</i>	S		G	B	
<i>Pinot Grigio 2010</i>	B		G	S	
<i>Riesling 2010</i>	GG*	B	B	G	G
<i>True Chardonnay 2010</i>	S		S	B	B

GG= Double Gold, G=Gold, S=Silver, B=Bronze, *=Best In Class
A blank space does not necessarily mean no medal was awarded

You Be The Judge

Have you ever wondered why some wines earn gold medals at one competition and bronze medals at another competition? So do we. Take a look at the chart above and notice the different medals. One interesting wine to note is the Dry Riesling; it won a double gold medal at the Eastern Competition. However, it received a Bronze at the Finger Lakes Competition. So, what gives? The answer is simple: different people have different tastes. If everyone had the same taste in wine, there would not be much variety and the industry would be, well, boring.

So, how do you know if you are drinking a “good” wine? Just taste it and decide for yourself. We are, of course, proud of our award winning wines, but we also realize that everyone has a personal preference. Drink what you like!

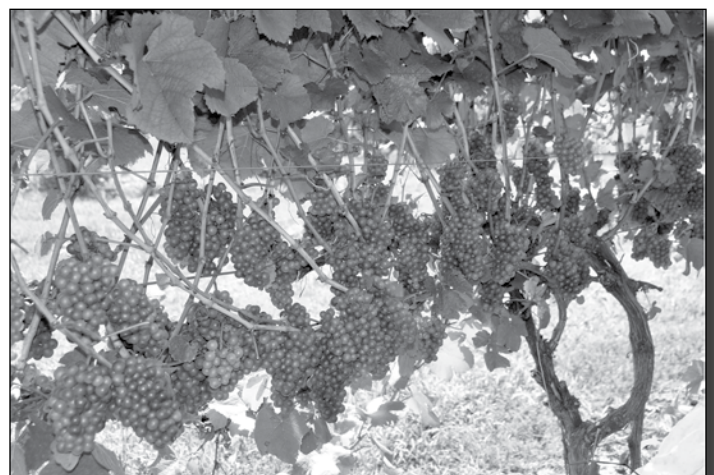
The 2011 growing season started very slowly. The spring was cool and warm weather was late in arriving. This cool weather pattern delayed the onset of growth sufficiently that all danger of a spring frost was past when it did finally turn warm. As a result of the relatively mild winter and the total absence of a spring frost, there is a huge crop hanging on the vines.

The cool weather pattern continued into May and we had some concern about getting enough heat units to allow the latest ripening varieties, like Riesling and the Cabernets, to sufficiently ripen by the end of the growing season. Finally, near the end of May, the weather warmed up. Then, during most of the summer we experienced above normal temperatures, which brought us back from being “behind” to being more on schedule. In the end, we are on track for a “normal” harvest in terms of a harvest date.

Interestingly, it actually got too hot this summer. It seems that grape vine leaves “shut down” when temperatures rise much above 90°F, and we had a number of these unusually warm days this summer. So, while we thought that the vines were getting ahead after the cold start this spring, it seems that the summer temperatures were a little too hot and we are at the “normal” stage of development for this time of the year.

Ripening takes place during the months of August through October, and these are the months where the weather is really critical. So far, August has been above normal in temperature and reasonably dry, so this could be a fantastic year if these conditions continue. But at this point, its too early to tell what kind of vintage 2011 will be – we will just have to wait and see what happens in September and October.

We are currently going through the vineyards removing leaves that cover the fruit and dropping the extra crop so that the vines can adequately ripen the remaining fruit. In some fields, we are dropping almost ¾ of the grapes. Thinning is done by hand, one bunch at a time. It's very laborious and expensive, but it is critical that each plant has the crop adjusted to match its ability to ripen the fruit.



Pinot Gris grapes exposed to the sun after leaf pulling

Our Best Wine Ever

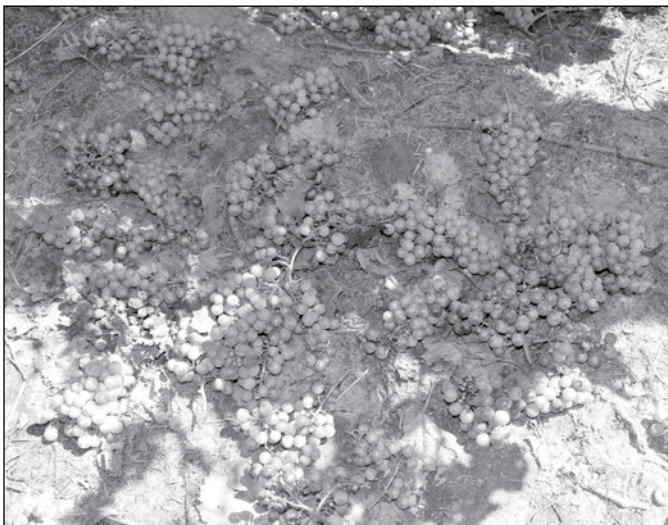
In the last issue of the newsletter, we told you about the 2011 Riesling Proprietors Reserve and how our winemaker regarded it as one of the best wines ever from Fenn Valley. The grapes used to make this wine were heavily infected with Botrytis, the mold responsible for the Trockenbeereausleses of Germany and the Sauternes of France. Under the right conditions, which we experienced last fall, this mold dehydrates the grape berries, concentrating the flavors as it imparts an apricot character to the wine.

This semi-dry Riesling Proprietors Reserve is loaded with tropical fruit with a distinct peach-apricot character from the Botrytis. Sales were so spectacular when it was released that we had to impose a 6-bottle limit to throttle sales, lest we run out before the end of summer.

Our winemaker was heard to say how he was looking forward to entering this wine in the various contests that we participate in. His comments were that the judges would either love it because of its uniquely different but intense flavors, or hate it because the wine is so different from a typical Riesling. Well, it turns out that the latter is the case. Not surprisingly, this beautiful wine is too far off track to be appreciated by the panels of judges that have had the opportunity to evaluate it.

Our winemaker has been a judge in a number of contests, and the typical criteria for a medal is that the wine must be “true to varietal character”. In other words, the wine must taste like every other wine of its type – and this wine has a unique character that is nowhere near the “average” Riesling.

We still regard it as the best wine from Fenn Valley, and customers who have the opportunity to taste it next to our “regular” Riesling tend to agree that this is indeed a spectacular wine. So, who cares what the judges say? We have often maintained that the most important judge is you.



Thinned grape clusters dropped to the ground

Celebrate the 2011 Harvest With Us

We are pleased to share a winemakers dinner with you, celebrating the new harvest. Both evenings will begin with a cellar tour at 6:15 PM. A sparkling wine and cheese reception will follow at 6:45, with the first course served at 7:15.

On November 5 we will feature the popular Chef Christine Ferris, and on November 12 we will feature the talented Chef Jim LaPerriere.

The cost is \$70 per person, which includes *everything*, food, wines, tax, and tip. Due to the high demand for these festive occasions, *reservations are required, accepted October 1.*

(Note: please see our website for our cancellation policy.)

Dinner #1

November 5, featuring Chef Christine Ferris

Terrine of forced pork and duck, flavored with Calvados and roasted apples
Dry Riesling 2010

Roasted Root Vegetables on a bed of arugula, topped with spicy pecans, Gorgonzola, and honey balsamic dressing
Proprietor's Reserve Riesling 2010

Smoked Quail glazed with a ginger plum sauce on a bed of wild rice
Edelzwicker 2010

Wild Mushroom and Boursin Stuffed Pork Chop topped with a Marsala mushroom sauce, side of barley with onions and garlic, and roasted kale.
True Chardonnay 2010
Merlot 2010

Hazelnut Flourless Torte
Late Harvest Vignoles 2010

Dinner #2

November 12, featuring Chef Jim LaPerriere

Smoked Salmon and Crispy Chive-Polenta
Pinot Noir 2009

Creamy Potato, Leek, and Roasted Parsnip Bisque
True Chardonnay 2010

Upside-Down Wild Mushroom Tart, mixed local baby greens, goat cheese, truffle oil vinaigrette
Proprietor's Reserve Riesling 2010

Pancetta-Wrapped Roast Pork Loin, Roasted shallot and dried fruit stuffing, roasted autumn vegetables, butternut squash gnocchi with brown butter, Parmesan, and sage
Dry Riesling 2010
Merlot 2010

Local Apple and Dried Blueberry Crisp
Late Harvest Vignoles 2010

Mark Your Calendars...

November 5: HARVEST DINNER #1. Chef Christine Ferris will use her talents to create an impressive dinner featuring Fenn Valley wines. \$70pp includes food, wines, taxes, tip. Menu on page 3. *Reservations required, accepted October 1.*

November 12: HARVEST DINNER #2. Chef Jim LaPerriere will return to once again create a delicious fall dinner paired with our wines.. \$70pp includes food, wines, taxes, tip. Menu on page 3. *Reservations required, accepted October 1.*

December 3: NOUVEAU FEST. Join us from 1-5 as we introduce the first wine from the 2011 vintage. Visit the wine cellar where you will taste the newest Fenn Valley wines in their infancy. Fun, food, and good wine. *No admission charge, no reservations.*

January 21: CHILI COOKOFF. Join us from 2 to 5pm for our 14th annual chili cookoff. Don't want to enter a chili? Bring your special hors d'oeuvre for this fun mid-winter "potluck" event. More details in the November newsletter. *No charge, chili contestants must pre-register.*

Feb 2012: GIRL'S AFTERNOON OUT. Details in the November newsletter. *Reservations required, accepted January 1.*

March 24: PRE-RELEASE DINNER. Details in the winter newsletter. *Reservations required, accepted February 1.*

March 10, 11 & 17, 18: PRE-RELEASE BARREL TASTING AND FOOD PAIRING DEMO. Taste our newest wines paired with tasty food samples. Order your favorites and save 25-30%. Details in the winter newsletter.

April 28: ETHNIC WINEMAKER'S DINNER. Join us as we make a culinary excursion to a foreign land. Additional details in the winter newsletter. *Reservations required, accepted March 1.*

May 2012: GIRL'S AFTERNOON OUT. Details in the January newsletter. *Reservations required, accepted April 1.*

June 23: FENN VALLEY OPEN HOUSE/WINE FESTIVAL

Summer 2012: SUMMER EVENING COOKOUT. You bring the grillmaster, we supply everything else. Natchez Trace will be the entertainment at all three outings.

Tours

What makes our tours so popular is the focus on education and the wine tasting. We help you understand how and why we make each of our many different wines and wine styles.

Most tours begin with an explanation of the basic winemaking process followed by comparative tastings of different wines to illustrate how changes in the process affect flavor and the wine style. For instance, you might taste the Dry Riesling then the semi-dry Riesling, or a barrel aged Chardonnay and an unoaked Chardonnay. We explain the differences and what we did to make each wine different. As an added feature, if you take a cellar tour, you will most likely taste these wines right out of the tanks and barrels.

Our unique vineyard tours take you into the vineyards where the grapes were grown. In the fall, when the grapes are ripe, we let you taste the grapes and then taste the wine made from those grapes. We also go into detail describing all the steps that go into the growing of premium wine grapes. With either tour, you become an informed wine consumer and hopefully a devoted fan of Fenn Valley.

Visit www.fennvalley.com for tour times and details.

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