

Mon-Sat 11-5 & Sun 1-5 year around *plus...*

July/Aug: Mon-Sat 11-6

Sep/Oct: Fri-Sat 11-6

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FENN Valley

VINEYARDS AND WINE CELLAR

November/December 2011

For those who may have forgotten...

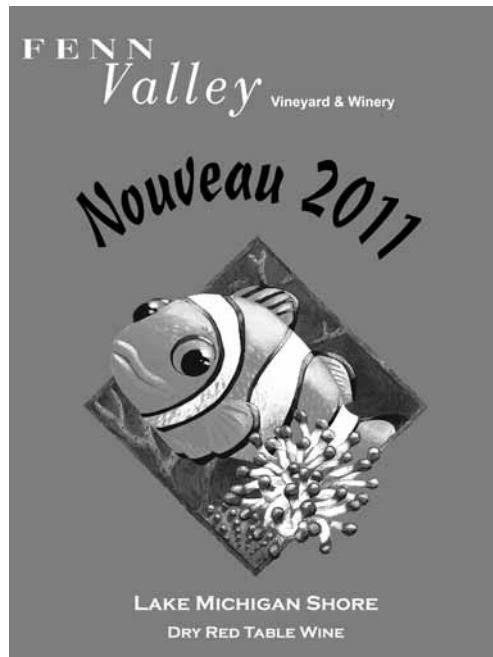
I-196 to exit 34 (between Holland & South Haven). East on M-89 at Exit 34 for 3½ mi to 62nd St. South (right) on 62nd 1 mi to 122nd Ave. Left on 122nd ¼ mi. The winery is on the right.
Follow the signs.

<http://www.fennvalley.com>

Nouveau Fest 2011

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Fenn Valley's Nouveau Fest! To celebrate we will be doing something a little different. We have decided to have a pizza party and use pizza as a pairing for the wine. After all, we consider Nouveau to be the "ultimate" pizza wine. .

So, what exactly is Nouveau? Simply put, a Nouveau is the first wine of the new vintage. The Fenn Valley Nouveau is a dry red wine from the 2011 vintage. Expect a fruity wine, full of berry flavors with a smooth finish. It is a perfect addition to any holiday table or as a wine to sip in front of the fireplace during those cold winter months. The wine also ages very well and every year we set a few bottles aside so that we can gather with family and friends to open several past vintages and do a vertical tasting.



Twenty years ago, we decided to start celebrating the release of the first wine of our vintage in the same tradition of the French with their Beaujolais Nouveau. We have had a lot of fun sharing Nouveau with you year after year and we hope you will join us again this year.

Several varieties of homemade pizza will be offered at the event, allowing you to experiment with pairing your favorite wines with the different pizza samples. For example, try the Pinot Grigio with the Pesto Pizza or the Late Harvest Vignoles with Dessert Pizza. Even if you have dietary restrictions, we plan to offer vegetarian pizzas as well as gluten-free and Lactose-free options (while supplies last).

This is also an opportunity for you to taste wines from the 2010 vintage on one of our cellar tours that we will be offering during the afternoon. This is a great way to kick-off your holiday celebrations! Bring your friends and family to relax with a glass of wine. Nouveau Fest runs from 1-5 PM on December 3, 2011.

Vintage 2011

As this tome is being written during the third week of October, we are only about 2/3 of the way through the harvest of 2011. Last year (2010) we were almost finished at this point because of the warm spring and early bud break of 2010. In contrast, the spring of 2011 was cool and the onset of growth did not occur until the first week of May, three weeks later than 2010 and 1 week later than "normal".

Even though we experienced unusually warm weather during July and August of 2011, the warm temperatures did not advance the grape maturity

and ripening enough to make much of a difference. The result is that our harvest is about 5 days behind "normal" and we are struggling to get everything in before the first snows of the season.

The mild winter and late spring meant that we had a higher than normal bud survival, which resulted in a greater than "normal" crop. Although we thinned many of our vineyards this August to assure that the plants would be able to ripen the grapes, the quantity of grapes that we have been processing is 10-15% greater than "normal" and we are literally bursting at the seams. *(Continued on page 2)*

(Vintage 2011 continued) Fortunately, we have had some beautiful weather this fall to ripen our grapes. Late August and most of September were dry and sunny, which is exactly what we need to ripen the grapes. And then the first 10 days of October were beautiful, sunny days with daytime temperatures in the low 80's and cool nights - perfect ripening weather. We did not harvest anything during these sunny days, since we wanted to get everything as ripe as possible. Now that the "normal" cool days of Fall have returned, we are scrambling to get everything in.

For the first time in 38 years, we had some serious problems with our two legged friends this fall. In late September, as the Sauvignon Blanc grapes were reaching maturity, we noticed large flocks of starlings hovering around the vineyard. A walk through the vineyard showed that the birds had discovered how tasty these grapes were. After losing about 30% of the grapes, we immediately harvested our first crop of Sauvignon Blanc. Immediately adjacent to the Sauvignon Blanc is our Merlot, which the birds quickly discovered. Within two days, 40% of the Merlot grapes were gone, so we brought those in as well. Fortunately, both varieties were very ripe and are yielding beautiful wines.

For those of you who remember our dry Gewürztraminer from years past, we are pleased to say that this wine will join our releases for the summer of 2012. After years of experimenting, we will be releasing our first ever Sauvignon Blanc this coming summer. And finally, we are planning to release 100 cases of a sweet Muscat for the first time.

A New Wine

Sauvignon Blanc is a wine that is quickly gaining popularity amongst American wine consumers. It is a dry, crisp white wine with a nice balance of acidity. The grape originated in the Loire Valley of France and was brought to the United States in the 1880's.

The flavors of Sauvignon Blanc vary greatly depending on climate and geographical locations. Typically, the tastes range from grassy and asparagus to citrus and tropical. We are finding that the citrus and grapefruit flavor of Fenn Valley Sauvignon Blanc is very typical of this wine from the Marlborough region of New Zealand.

Sauvignon Blanc pairs well with a variety of foods. Try it with appetizers and cheese, sushi (it's one of the only wines that pairs well with this cuisine), or Caesar salads.

Join us at Wine Fest 2012 on June 23, when our first Sauvignon Blanc will be released.

Wines For Your Holiday Events

Now that the holiday season is approaching, perhaps you are preparing to host or attend a few holiday parties and dinners. One detail you never want to forget is the wine. What should you serve for holiday dinners? What should you bring as a hostess gift? What should you serve at your own holiday party?

No matter what food you serve, we have a wine that will pair well. Are you serving chicken, turkey, or ham? You might consider Nouveau or Pinot Noir, or perhaps a Riesling - either the dry and semi-dry, depending on your taste preferences. Other good choices include Edelzwicker, Meritage, or Lakeshore White. For dessert, consider Cabernet Franc with your chocolate and Late Harvest Vignoles for your fruity or lighter desserts. The winemaker's family likes to dip biscotti into those two wines at their holiday get-togethers.

Being invited to a holiday party is exciting, but deciding what to bring for a hostess gift is usually not. A safe bet is a bottle of wine. If you know what the host/hostess typically drinks, your job is much easier. But if you don't, try one of these suggestions.... Capriccio is a great selection if you are looking for an easy drinking and popular red wine. It is dry, but very smooth, making it palatable for many people. In terms of white wines, you may want to select Edelzwicker or Riesling. Both are not completely dry, but are also not overly sweet. Whatever wine you choose to bring, it is almost certain that it will be appreciated.

If you are hosting your own holiday party, be sure to mix up your wine selection. Every person has a different palate; so, you will want to have a selection across the board. Be sure to include your favorites, though. After all, it is your party. One example of a wine line-up may include: Pinot Grigio, Riesling, Late Harvest Vignoles, Capriccio, and Meritage. You may also want to consider including a few bottles of sparkling wine to start your party. The new Blanc de Noir (released at Nouveau Fest) or Sparkling Riesling would be excellent choices for a holiday party.

The next couple months may feel like a whirlwind of activities, but when it's over, go ahead and pour yourself a glass of your favorite wine, take a deep breath, and relax. You deserve it.

13th Annual Chili Cook-off

As winter approaches, we are preparing to warm the cellar with a huge collection of tasty chilies. On January 21, we will be hosting our 13th annual Chili Cook-Off and "Wine Lovers Potluck." We look forward to sharing in great wines, chilies, and other delicious potluck items.

We encourage all of you to pull out your favorite chili recipes and whip up a pot to enter into one of the four categories. Even if you are not planning to compete, we would still like to have your chili as a part of our "wine lover's potluck."

The categories will be the same as they were last year: Four Legs (beef and pork), Two Legs (Fowl), Vegetarian (non-meat), and Exotic (Seafood or wild game, including venison). Our judges, who will once again be coming from the Secchia Center for Culinary Education at Grand Rapids Community College, are getting excited about trying YOUR entry.

Registration for the chili contestants will begin on December 1. ALL competing chilies must be pre-registered. On the day of the event, we require all competing chilies to be at the winery between 1:00 PM and 2:00 PM. Judging starts at 2:00 sharp and will be concluded by 3:00 PM.

Our "winelover's potluck" begins at 2:00 PM. Non-participants may bring an appetizer to share or another

chili. In fact, in an effort to provide enough chili for all visitors, anyone who brings a chili (whether it is to be judged or not) will receive **free admission** for up to two people per 4-quart pot of chili. *The entry fee for all others will be \$2.00 pp.*

Longtime musical friends of Fenn Valley, The Trace, will be entertaining all of us during the afternoon. They play classic "popular" music and you may have heard their music at previous winery events, such as Wine Fest or our Summer Evening Cook-Outs.

In addition to music, chili, and a potluck, we will be pouring wine by the glass. We will be featuring some of the new wines from the past vintage and encourage all of you to enjoy a glass of wine with your chili.

The schedule of activities for the day follows:

1:00-2:00- Registration of chilies

3:00- Winner announced

2:00-4:30- Wine Lover's Potluck

2:00-4:30- The Trace plays



Please be aware that we have no control over the quantity and selection of foods and chilies - this is your party. A late arrival may result in less food and chili options.

Cellar Tasting Tours Start November 12

When the weather turns colder and the harvest begins to draw to an end, we will be taking the tours from the vineyard to the cellar. The cellar tours, which begin November 12, will demonstrate how we turn our grapes into wine and how changes in cellar procedures impact wine styles and flavors. Many wines are tasted as "pairs", such as dry vs semi-dry, oak vs un-oaked, new wine vs aged wine, etc.

Expect to taste our newest wines from the barrels and tanks on this informative tour. Included in the tastings this year will be our first ever Sauvignon Blanc as well as the much anticipated Dry Gewurztraminer.

Each cellar tour will last between an hour and a half and an hour and forty-five minutes. The cost is \$8.00 per person, which will include a Fenn Valley logo glass and a \$5.00 coupon good towards the purchase of four bottles of wine.

All cellar tours start at 3:00 PM and will meet in the Fennville tasting room. Reservations are strongly encouraged and will be taken up to seven days in advance of the tour.

More information about our cellar tasting tours is available on the website: www.fennvalley.com.



Wine sampling from a barrel on a cellar tour.

Mark Your Calendars!

We have quite a slate of upcoming fun and educational events scheduled for the months ahead. If your calendar is like ours, it fills early. We're giving you advance notice, so be sure to mark your calendars now so that you won't miss out on the good times.

December 3: NOUVEAU FEST. Celebrate the new vintage as you sip on the first wine from the 2011 vintage. See page 1 for more details. *No admission and no reservations required.*

January 21: Get ready for the 13th annual **CHILI COOK-OFF & WINE LOVER'S POT LUCK.** Don't want to enter a chili? Bring a special hors d'oeuvre or non-competing chili for this fun mid-winter "potluck" event. See page 3 for more details. 2-4:30pm. *No reservations required, but chili contestants must pre-register (accepted Dec 1). No admission fee for those who bring chilies (whether for competition or not), \$2.00 pp all others.*

February 4: GIRL'S AFTERNOON OUT. Chef Christine Ferris will present a "Valentine Dinner Wine & Food Pairing". Details at www.fennvalley.com in December. \$30/pp includes lunch, wine, tax, tip. 11-2 pm. *Reservations required (accepted January 1).*

March 24: PRE-RELEASE WINEMAKER'S DINNER. Taste the Pre-Release wines the way they should be tasted - with food. A gourmet meal matched to the newest Pre-Release wines. Details to follow. *Reservations required (accepted Feb 1).*

March 10,11, & 17, 18: WINE & FOOD PAIRING DEMO We'll select 6 new, unreleased wines and serve them one at a time with a food sample that pairs well with the wine. Order any of the wines that you like and save 25-30%. More information in the February newsletter or online after February 1. *Reservations required (accepted Feb 1), no admission charge.*

April 28: ETHNIC WINEMAKER'S DINNER. Join us on a culinary excursion to Brazil with Chef Christine Ferris. \$75 pp. includes champagne, wine, tax, tip. *Reservations required (accepted Feb 1).*

May 5: GIRL'S AFTERNOON OUT.

Join us for another fun afternoon as Chef Christine Ferris demonstrates how to use whole grains for a nutritious and healthy life style. More details in the February newsletter. \$30/pp includes lunch, wine, tax and tip. 11-2 pm. *Reservations required (accepted March 1).*

June 23: FENN VALLEY WINE FEST & OPEN HOUSE. Once again we will kick off the beginning of summer with outdoor wine tasting, ethnic foods and great music. \$8.00 adults. *No reservations.* 1-5pm.

Summer 2012: PICNIC IN THE VINEYARDS. You bring the grill-master and we supply everything else - wine, food, grill, and The live musical entertainment.. *Reservations required (accepted June 1).*



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Toast the new year with our **Blanc de Noir** (100% Pinot Noir) which will be released at Nouveau Fest on Dec 3. We only made 22 cases, so get yours before it is all gone.