



Lake Country Sipping

A new vineyard expands the Petoskey region's wine scene

By Dianna Stampfler

Sampling new varieties of wine is a refreshing way to enjoy a delightful Up North afternoon, especially when you're surrounded by acres of vineyards and the backdrop of a scenic 113-acre nature preserve.

Boyne Valley Vineyards, a small boutique tasting room nestled along U.S. 131 between Walloon Lake and Petoskey, offers a friendly new space to do just that.

Ownership is a family affair, with Tom and Christi Mahaney, and Mary Ann and Marc Lippe (Tom's twin sister and brother-in-law) sharing responsibilities at the vineyard, which launched in 2016 and produced 1,000 cases in its first year.

Christi (an environmental engineer

for 20-plus years) and Mary Ann (who managed a restaurant, golf course, and banquet center for more than 25 years) tend to the vineyard, winery, and tasting room. Tom and Marc, "weekend warriors" at the vineyard whose day jobs are in medical sales, handle all construction projects, including the 1,500-square-foot "monitor barn"-style tasting room and the new 22- by 25-foot elevated Tree House tasting deck, which will welcome guests in late spring.

The year-round Tree House deck space, which overlooks the vineyard and features a roofed bar section surrounded by maple trees, connects to the main tasting room and is accessible from both inside and outside.

"This really is an ideal spot to enjoy a casual afternoon," says Chris Calleja, a local musician who performs regularly at the tasting room. "It's become a popular gathering place for those who want to relax with a glass of wine and catch up with friends."

Adds Mary Carol Cinder of Macomb, who first visited the winery just months after it opened: "We fell in love with the building. We were impressed with our flight of wines, and had a wonderful time talking with our informative and personable server. We enjoyed it so much, we brought our family with us on our next visit. We've never been disappointed."

The tasting room features several glass roll-up garage-style doors that let

in an abundance of natural light and allow for fresh air circulation on warmer days. Guests gather around the mobile bar, industrial-style two-story fireplace, high-top tables, casual seating, and outdoor patio to enjoy wine and snacks such as charcuterie, a cheese and cracker plate, and hummus with naan bread. Live entertainment on Fridays and Saturdays provides soothing background music.

Boyne Valley Vineyards is one of 14 wineries in the Petoskey Wine Region, located within Michigan's fifth and northernmost American Viticultural Area (AVA). The Tip of the Mitt AVA is known for its cold hardy hybrid varieties such as Marquette, Frontenac, La Crescent, Frontenac Blanc, Petite Pearl, Lemberger, Traminette, Vignoles, Cayuga, and a dozen others.

Since 2016, nearly 6,000 vines have been planted on two of the Boyne Valley Vineyard properties. A 14-acre parcel in Boyne City was planted first, with 6

acres of Marquette and Petit Pearl vines. Two years ago, 4 acres were planted on the property adjacent to the tasting room, where Marquette, La Crescent, Itasca, and Frontenac Gris are maturing now.

"We also source grapes from other Tip of the Mitt growers, as well as growers in the Traverse City area and around southwest Michigan," says Christi Mahaney, noting they try to use only Michigan fruit in their wines.

"We love cold-hardy grape varieties that are grown in this region, and we'll continue to focus on those for our upcoming vintages. We don't distribute yet; you can only get our wines in our Petoskey tasting room. We'll probably move to online shopping and a wine club at some point in the near future," she adds.

Best-sellers include Estate Marquette (dry, oaked red), Boodlin' Blend (semi-dry white), and Sunset Rose (semi-sweet). A new mead (honey wine) will be added to the lineup this spring.

"Originally we just wanted to start a

small business, agricultural in nature, in northwest Michigan that could take us into retirement and (that we could) possibly leave to our kids," Christi says. "We decided on grape-growing after initially looking at hops. We thought we'd just be grape-growers, but after several years of growing and seeing how much effort went into that process, we decided that to make the effort worth it we needed to go from vine to wine. We then started planning for winemaking and tasting-room development."

WHAT'S NEXT: The actual production of Boyne Valley's eight wines takes place in Boyne City. The owners plan to move wine production operations to the tasting room property in 2022, at which time public tours will be offered. ≈

PLAN IT!

Boyne Valley Vineyards Tasting Room
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boynevalleyvineyards.com



This page: Friends gather in an igloo to toast good times at Boyne Valley Vineyards.

Opposite page: The tasting room is fun for thirsty visitors or locals meeting to catch up.