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York uncorked

Autumn is harvest season on Pennsylvania's wine trail

By Stephanie Citron, Special to The Baltimore Sun



I say "York, Pennsylvania." You say ... Amish markets? Factory tours? Outlet malls?

How about fine wines? More than 100 wineries operate within Pennsylvania's borders — the state ranks eighth in U.S. wine production — and some of the best lie along the "Uncork York" wine trail. Not surprising, since around 1818, German immigrant Thomas Eichelberger planted a vineyard in what is today York's Farquar Park.

The Uncork York wine trail encompasses 14 wineries and spans four Eastern Pennsylvania counties: Adams, Dauphin, Lancaster and York. Its cohesion has inspired countless wine events and activities, particularly celebrating the autumn harvest. This year's relentlessly hot, dry summer was a blessing for York wine makers, producing sweeter grapes that ripened unusually early and yielded a shared optimism

about this year's vintage.

The fall harvest season's culminating celebration, Wine Just Off The Vine, occurs in late November, when the wineries showcase their newest releases with tastings, paired dinners and insiders' tours of the process of winemaking. Leading up to that are a host of autumnal festivals and events that make a weekend wine tasting trip a perfect getaway.

Here is a guide to the wineries along the Uncork York trail and the fall festivities that surround their harvest:

Naylor Wine Cellars

Naylor, the oldest winery in York County, dates to 1975 and sits on 27 acres. It produces more than 30 varieties of grapes, many of which are sold to other wineries around the East Coast, and has received countless awards, including for its distinctive packaging and wine labels depicting historic American Revolution events.

Favorites of the regulars are Naylor's Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, but owner Dick Naylor is also gaining wide acclaim for his award-winning ice wines and fruit wines. Naylor, who runs the winery with his wife, Audrey; daughter, Janey, and son-in-law, Ted, his winemaker, kindly devotes much of his time to customers in the tasting room, enjoying the fermented fruits of his labor. His mother recently celebrated her 108th birthday and attributes her longevity to drinking a glass of wine every day.

Throughout the summer the winery hosts open-to-the public big band concerts on Saturday nights. Naylor also hosts the county's lively Fall Grape Harvest Festival and wine pairing dinners in the winter months. The wine shop sells the region's best selection of home winemaking supplies. Tasting room is open to the public and free vineyard tours are available by reservation.

Annual production: 22,000 gallons

Varieties: More than thirty varieties, including traditionals, blends and ice wines.

Info: 4069 Vineyard Road, Stewartstown, Pa. 17363, 800-292-3370, naylorwine.com. Open Monday to Saturday, 11a.m.-6 p.m.

Allegro Vineyards

Allegro is a wine enthusiasts' vineyard. As York County's second-oldest winery, its harvest is dedicated to producing premium wines. The five-acre vineyard grows some of the oldest Merlot and Cabernet grapes in the region, and Allegro purchases the rest of its grapes from regional producers.

The winery is an understated, no-nonsense, 4,000 square-foot facility designed solely for high function and quality performance. Still, owners Carl Helrich and his wife happily host tours of the grape press and crusher, oak barrels and steely fermenting tanks. Outside by the vineyard is a charming picnic pavilion overlooking the scenic countryside.

Annual production: 4,200 cases

Varieties: Pinot Grigio, Chambourcin, Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Rosé, Vidal Blanc, Riesling, Harmony, Chardonnay and Forte.

Info: 3475 Sechrist Road, Brogue, Pa. 17309, 717-927-9148, allegrowines.com. Open Wednesday to Friday: 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. -5 p.m. and Sunday, 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.

Hauser Estate Winery

The family-owned Hauser Estate Winery is one of the prettiest wineries on the trail. Built in a former apple orchard and perched high on a hill with panoramic vistas of verdant farmlands and the Gettysburg battlefield, it was designed to be a "destination" winery. The scenic, glass-windowed tasting room offers 360-degree vistas of the valley.

One unique product is the hard cider, produced from Hauser's own apples, sold in jugs and on draft on premises. Hauser hosts year-round weekend live music events and Thursday night happy hours. After the spring and fall harvest there is an open-to-the-public harvest-stomp, where visitors can stomp their own grapes and bottle their "stomp.". Hauser's production facility is in the cellar under its stunning glass-enclosed tasting room and open for tours.

Annual production: 20,000 gallons

Varieties: Bordeaux, Merlot, Cabernet, Chardonnay, some blends and hard cider.

Info: 410 Cashtown Road, Biglerville, Pa. 17307, 717-334-4888, hauserestate.com. Open Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Sunday, 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Nissley Vineyard & Winery Estate

Set upon a 300-acre farmland estate, Nissley's winery is housed in an enchanting stone-arched, renovated tobacco barn. Upon arrival Nissley offers visitors free tastings and a detailed guidebook for self-guided tours through scenic vineyards of Vinifera, French-hybrid and Labrusca (Native American) grapes and the winery's production room. The wines have won numerous awards over the vineyard's 30-year history. Offering some of the largest varietal selection on the trail, current top sellers is Fantasy, a sweet, blended red wine.

Production: 20,000 gallons annually

Varieties: 28; mostly variations of traditionals.

Info: 140 Vintage Drive, Bainbridge, Pa. 17502, 800-522-2387, nissleywine.com. Open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

Moon Dancer Vineyard & Winery

Moon Dancer specializes in European-style dry wines and limited production Pennsylvania sweet wines on its 12-acre vineyard. Winemakers Jim and Sue Miller are in the middle of cultivating another five acres of grapes. Moon Dancer's tasting room and winery — in a cellar 17 feet underground — are housed in a replica French chateau. The expansive grounds, perched above the Susquehanna River, are

perfect for numerous summer and fall concerts and tasting events. The winery's Wild Naked Chardonnay is a favorite for many folks.

Annual production: 4,200 cases

Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Grigio and Pinot Noir

Info: 1282 Klines Run Road, Wrightsville, Pa. 17368, 717-252-9463, moondancerwinery.com. Open Wednesday and Thursday, 12 p.m.- 5 p.m., Friday-Sunday, 11 a.m. – 6p.m.

In addition to those listed above, if you have time, also check out these three wineries:

Tamanend Winery, 759 Flory Mill Road, Lancaster, Pa., 717-560-9463, tamanendwinery.com. Proclaimed "Best Winery in Pennsylvania" on the Travel Channel's "The Official Best Of" show, Tamanend is a chic urban winery located in downtown Lancaster with fascinating, innovative winemaking methods.

Adams County Winery, 251 Peach Tree Roads, Orrtanna, PA 17353-9753, 717-334-4631; adamscountywinery.com. Winemakers John Kramb and Katherine Bigler produce year-round music events to complement its mostly sweeter-tasting wines. "We want people who don't know wines to feel comfortable visiting us." Folks flock to Adams' Home Wine Making Classes, where they demonstrate a step-by-step procedure, from selecting ingredients to bottling. The autumn class is Oct. 24 and is \$25. Reservations are required.

Waltz Vineyards Estate Winery, 1599 Old Line Road, Manheim, Pa., 717-664-9463; waltzvineyards.com. Uncorked's newest winery has a state of the art, microclimate winemaking facility where it produces small lot, award winning world-class wines from homegrown handpicked Vinifera grapes.

5 fall harvest festivals

Naylor's Harvest Festival. Oct. 3. Features guided winery tours, wagon rides through the vineyard, wine tastings, a grape stomping contest and live music. A featured event is the Connoisseur Tasting (\$12.00) to sample an array of Naylor's premium wines and includes mementos. Admission is \$5 and includes a \$3 wine credit.

National Apple Harvest Festival. Oct. 9-10. South Mountain Fairgrounds, Route 234, near Arendtsville, Pa. Wine tasting is an integral part of this 50-year-old festival celebrating the region's oldest produce. Two wineries host booths at the festival and tastings are offered at three local vineyards: Adams County, Hauser Estate and Reid Orchards. Admission is \$9. Go to appleharvest.com.

Moondancer Winery's Bluegrass Harvest Festival. Oct 9. Live music, wine tasting and activities including "Barefoot Grape Stomping." Admission is \$20. Go to moondancerwinery.com

October Fest. Oct. 9. German music, food, wine and hard cider tastings all day at Hauser Estate Winery. Free admission. Food ranges from \$10-\$15. Wine and cider by the glass. Go to hauserestate.com/events.

Wine Just Off The Vine. Nov. 19-21. A dozen wineries open their doors for free tours and tastings of their newest harvest, including presentation and pairings. Tickets are \$10 and include admission for all 12 wineries during all three event days. Go to uncorkyork.com.

If you go

The Uncork York Wine Trail

Go to uncorkyork.com for full listing of the Uncork York wineries and a wine trail map.

Lodging

Lady Linden B&B, 505 Linden Avenue, York, 717-843-2929, ladylindenbedandbreakfast.com. Meticulously restored historic inn serving organic, local fare for breakfast. Rates start at \$129 per night.

Harvest Moon B&B, 311 E Main Street, New Holland, 717-354-0213, harvestmoonbandb.com. Culinary farm to table inn near Lancaster. Its guest rooms named after apples, serving gourmet meals created from local provisions. Rates start at \$79 per night.

Dining

Accomac Inn, 6330 River Drive, York, 717-252-1521, accomacinn.com. French cuisine from a seasonal menu procured from local producers.

John J. Jeffries, 300 Harrisburg Ave., Lancaster 717-431-3307, johnjjeffries.com. Menu based upon local, seasonal, sustainable organic agriculture from Lancaster County small family farms.

Cafe Chocolate of Lititz, 40 E. Main St., Lititz, 717-626-0123, chocolatelititz.com. Organic cafe serving sustainable fare from local producers. Famous for its chocolate confections.

Pairings

Don't miss these exceptional wine accoutrements along the way.

September Cheese Farm, 460 Mill Road, Honey Brook, 610-273-3552, septemberfarmcheese.com. Produces handmade organic cheeses.

Lacigale, 451 PA 117, Mt. Gretna, 717-964-3313, lacigale-usa.com. Handmade French provincial tablecloths, napkins, placemats, dishtowels and more.

Cressbrook Beef Farm, Organic, 838 Penn Grant Road, Lancaster 717-519-7174, cressbrookfarm.com. Grass-fed beef, fresh from the farm.

A Loaf Of Bread, 16 McGovern Avenue, Lancaster, 717-509-0500, aloafofbread.com/breads. Organic artisan breads, pastries and more.

—*Stephanie Citron*

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