

Bucks Wineries Celebrate "Fruits of Labor" with Nouveau Festival

CHRISTINE CARROLL
THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

The banners proclaim "*Le Beaujolais Nouveau est arrive!*" as the French celebrate the arrival of the nouveau wine, one of the most highly anticipated events on their national calendar.

This year the members of the Bucks County Wine Trail will continue the time-honored French tradition with a Nouveau Festival held on November 11 and 12. Each winery will release a nouveau wine and will offer a variety of activities to celebrate the 2006 harvest.

"It's a very special time of the year," says Jerry Forest, president of the Bucks County Wine Trail and owner of Buckingham Valley Vineyards. "It's a time to come together to enjoy the fruits of our labors."

The Nouveau tradition began as a celebration of the harvest in the local bars, cafés and bistros of Beaujolais and Lyons in France. The French word *nouveau* means "new" and refers to a light, fruity wine that is bottled within weeks of being produced. A technique known as carbonic maceration or "*macération beaujolaise*," is used to ferment the grapes.

With this method, the majority of the grapes in the fermenting tank are left whole in bunches on their stems. The weight from the upper bunches crush the grapes at the bottom of the tank, which have begun to ferment in the normal way. The carbon dioxide given off by the crushed grapes keeps the air away and allows the uncrushed grapes to feed on themselves and extract flavor from the inner skins.

After about a week, the uncrushed grapes are pressed, and juices from the top and bottom of the tank are blended. This technique preserves the fresh, fruity quality of the wine, without extracting bitter tannins.

Traditional Beaujolais Nouveau comes from the Beaujolais region in France and is made from hand-picked Gamay grapes. The name mostly closely identified with Beaujolais Nouveau is Georges Duboeuf, a French winemaker who is almost as famous for his colorful labels as he is for his wine. More than a fifth of Duboeuf's annual production, about 4 million bottles, is Beaujolais Nouveau.

The French government has strict guidelines on the release of nouveau wines. By law, nouveau cannot be legally sold before 12:01 AM on the third Thursday in November. Recent statistics reveal that



more than 65 million bottles of Beaujolais Nouveau, nearly half the region's total annual wine production, are distributed and consumed around the world.

Most Beaujolais wine is red, but small amounts of Beaujolais Blanc and Beaujolais Rosé are also made in both the Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages appellations. Beaujolais Blanc is made not from Gamay, but from Chardonnay, which thrives in the nearby Mâconnais region. The quantity produced is strictly limited, and very little is exported.

Nouveau style red wines can be made from grapes other than Gamay. Beringer for example, has made its *California Nouveau* from the Pinot Noir and Valdiguié grape varieties. Bucks County wineries often use Chambourcin, De Chaunac and Chancellor, which grow well in this area and adapt easily to the nouveau style.

The characteristics of Nouveau wine, no matter what grape it is made from, are lightness, fruitiness and lower alcohol content. The taste is fresh and "grapey," and it is one of the only red wines meant to be served chilled, at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

During the weekend of the Nouveau Festival, each Bucks County winery will have its unique way of celebrating the harvest. Crossing Vineyards, for example, will debut its *Nouveau Blanc*, made in the French tradition of the Beaujolais Blanc.

Experience the French nouveau tradition right in your own backyard during the weekend of November 11 and 12. For more information, check the Bucks County Wine Trail's website for contact information and directions to member wineries: www.buckscountywinetrail.com

Le Nouveau est arrivé!

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is ample and there is a wheelchair ramp that is built into the front of the restaurant. As you walk in, the deli is to the right and the restaurant to the left. The restaurant is tastefully decorated with textured green walls and stained wood with long willow sticks stylishly used as walls to separate the tables and create an atmosphere of intimacy. They had (*what looked like*) custom made wrought iron light fixtures and tables and chairs that were faux finished with stain and varnish. Overall I felt that the décor suited the room and was simple yet elegant.

We were immediately seated at one of the window tables, given menus and asked if we wanted drinks. They do not have a liquor license but will bring glasses and uncork wine for the BYO crowd. They had a limited selection of beverages, sodas, iced tea and juices and we settled on a couple of seltzer waters with lemon. They were quickly delivered by our wonderful waiter Debbie who also brought us warm rolls with infused oil for dipping.

The menu was broken into two main sections with the lunch menu on the left and the dinner menu (served after 4 pm) on the right. This was somewhat confusing and I recommend having two separate menus to avoid this. The lunch menu offered creative sandwiches, salads and

other hot entrée's such as ribs, homemade polish kielbasa, wings and burgers. They have daily specials like BBQ Mondays, Polish Tuesdays, Whimsical Wednesdays, Smokin' Thursdays and Philly Fridays with a special attached to each day.

We were there for dinner and honed in on what was on offer. The menu has a lot of Polish influence with homemade pierogies, polish crepes and kielbasa and mash to name a few. They also offered filet mignon (\$19.95), rib eye steaks (\$14.95), rack of New Zealand lamb (\$22.95) and pork tenderloin and roasted pork loin (\$13.95). What caught my eye was their fish section. They had striped bass served over fresh spinach rice and topped with a fresh tomato salsa; this sounded very seasonal and very tempting (\$15.95). They also offered Mediterranean grouper which was steamed over sun dried tomato and spinach rice with a tomato garlic puree and a tomato cucumber salsa (\$14.95) and tilapia (\$12.95), tempura shrimp (\$15.95) and salmon (\$13.95). The menu boasts a broad range of reasonably priced pasta dishes including their "famous" angel and crab (\$13.95) which had fresh lump crabmeat tossed with asparagus, shaved carrot and finished with buffalo mozzarella (a favorite of mine) and Veal Spaghettini which contained ground veal, olive oil, fresh tomato, pecorino cheese and a

hint of nutmeg over angel hair pasta (\$12.95). They also have daily dinner specials for the budget minded diner.

We took a while to decide what we wanted as there were lots of tempting choices. We could not resist the pierogies and polish crepes as an appetizer and I ordered a shrimp and scallop risotto (\$14.95) and my wife ordered a seafood lasagna (\$14.95), they both turned out to be great choices. The pierogies came with a small cup of borscht for dipping and the crepe was drizzled with sour cream and fresh chives. My risotto was perfectly cooked and flavored with garlic and tomato and drizzled with herb oil, there were plenty of shrimp and scallops to round out the dish. My wife's seafood lasagna was a large portion of homemade and perfectly cooked lasagna noodles with shrimp and scallops and layered with fresh tomato and spinach in a rich seafood velouté. It is unusual for the two of us to order the same type of entrée but we could not resist.

When we asked about dessert a smile came over Debbie that gave us a feeling that she was going to tell us the secrets of the world. She explained their great homemade dessert choices such as mascarpone cheesecake, lemon bars, fresh fruit tart and a dessert for two that consisted of