



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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CT Farm Wineries Ripe for Visits in Autumn

Hartford, CT – Autumn is the peak of wine season here in Connecticut, according to Agriculture Commissioner F. Philip Prelli.

“One of our state’s best-kept secrets is its farm wineries,” said Commissioner Prelli, who also serves as Chairman of the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council. “Twenty-eight are open to the public, and many offer fun and entertainment for not just adults, but children as well. In addition to wine talks and tastings for parents, farm tours, pick-your-own crops, play areas, games, and other activities often are integrated into these family-friendly destinations.”

Winemaking is a relatively new, but quickly growing, industry in Connecticut. The first farm winery, Haight-Brown Vineyard in Litchfield, opened in 1975. This year, the state boasts 30 licensed farm wineries, each making between three and 14 different wines. Several include specialty fruit wines and hard ciders in their product lines.

For some farms, grape cultivation and winemaking has been one way to diversify in an age that has seen farms disappear at an alarming rate.

“Our sixth-generation farm saw an opportunity to extend our season, while offering something deliciously interesting and exciting to our longtime customers,” reflected Jamie Jones of Jones Family Farm and Winery in Shelton. “At the same time, it challenged and broadened our skill

as farmers, and also helped us to attract new customers who never knew we existed. It has been a win-win all around, both for us and for our customers.”

Although CT Grown wines are relatively new to the fine dining scene, many have earned respect and received awards on the international stage. Priam Vineyard’s Late Harvest Riesling, for example, received a Gold Medal at the 2008 Amenti del Vino International Wine Competition, while Sunset Meadow Vineyard’s 2007 Cayuga White won a Gold Medal at the 2009 Finger Lakes International Competition. Closer to home, the Big E Northeast Gold Wine Competition has recognized many of the state’s farm wineries for varieties that are outstanding in their field.

“Nothing pairs better with a delicious holiday meal than a fine CT Grown wine,” added Commissioner Prelli. “Whether seafood, meat, poultry, or vegetables are the focus, local wine is the perfect accompaniment.”

The Passport to Connecticut Farm Wineries Program, sponsored by the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council and administered by the state Department of Agriculture, runs annually from May until November and challenges residents and tourists to visit at least 14 Connecticut farm wineries. Passports bearing at least 14 different visit stamps at the end of the season are eligible to be entered into a random drawing for a two-week vacation for two in Spain. Two vacations for two are awarded each year. (No purchase is required during visits to qualify.)

Local liquor stores have begun to carry a few CT Grown wines, but most are available only directly from the winery at which it is made. For a complete listing of vineyards and wineries in Connecticut, and for more information about the Passport to Connecticut Farm Wineries Program, go to the Department of Agriculture’s website at www.CTGrown.gov and click on “Publications” at the left of the page.

CONNECTICUT GROWN - The Local Flavor

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