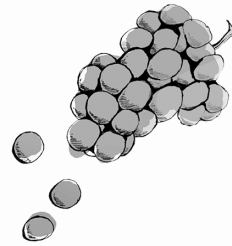


Michigan Wines



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Michigan Shines in the Limelight of Rising Interest in Riesling

LANSING — Michigan will be well-represented as Riesling wine producers and experts from around the globe gather to celebrate trends and opportunities at the second “Riesling Rendezvous” in Washington state July 27–29. Winemakers Sean O’Keefe, Chateau Grand Traverse; Adam Satchwell, Shady Lane Cellars; and Lee Lutes, Black Star Farms will join winemakers from Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States for a series of roundtable discussions on a range of topics on Riesling wines and vines. The Rendezvous is co-hosted by Chateau Ste. Michelle of Washington and Dr. Ernst Loosen of Dr. Loosen’s Estate in Germany’s Mosel region.

Sean O’Keefe and brother Ed O’Keefe III were among the leaders in the establishment of a global federation of Riesling producers, now known as the “International Riesling Foundation.”

“We’re a small community of producers,” said Sean O’Keefe. “So it’s important that we have a forum for discussion on topics of interest to Riesling producers.” O’Keefe is an invited panelist in the scheduled discussion on “New World Riesling Terroir” at the Rendezvous.

One of the tasks the Foundation board has undertaken is the determination of standard sweetness levels that will be easy for consumers to understand. The Riesling grape is vinified into a wide range of styles, from bone-dry to semi-dry to dessert wines (including sought-after Riesling ice wines).

“This range of sweetness levels can make it challenging for consumers to identify Riesling’s character,” says O’Keefe. “The work within the Foundation, led by respected wine writer Dan Berger, will help consumers find the styles they are seeking when they shop.”

Riesling, a cool-climate, aromatic white wine, is the leading varietal produced in Michigan. Acreage in Riesling in Michigan increased 58 percent from 2003 to 2006, leading the industry in growth. Michigan producers have long been champions of the variety as well-suited to Michigan’s unique growing conditions. At least 36 wineries in Michigan produce wines from Riesling grapes.

According to The Nielsen Company retail sales data, 2007 U.S. sales of Riesling wine accounted for just 1.5 percent of the case volume in stores that provide the survey company with sales data. However, this represents a 98 percent increase in sales of Riesling since January 2006. This trend offers important opportunities for Michigan producers, who have rapidly grown sales of all wines at a rate of more than 15 percent per year for the past 10 years.

Michigan producers are being recognized around the country for the quality of the Rieslings produced. St. J. Riesling from St. Julian Wine Company of Paw Paw, Michigan, was recognized by influential *Wine & Spirit* magazine’s June 2008 edition as one of “100 Top Values of the Year.” The wine has been awarded medals from many competitions in the past six years.

California winemaker Scott Harvey also gave the nod to Michigan in contracting with Forty-Five North winemaker Shawn Walters to produce a Michigan Riesling from the stellar 2007 vintage under his Jana label. It is available for sale throughout the United States.

— MORE —

More than 120 medals have been earned for Michigan Rieslings so far this year, including the following golds:

Bowers Harbor Vineyards

Pacific Rim International Wine Competition – 2006 Block II Off-Dry Riesling

Chateau Chantal

Tasters Guild International Wine Competition – 2004 Dry Riesling

Chateau Grand Traverse

Great Lakes Great Wine Competition – Riesling Ice Wine (Double Gold) and Whole Cluster Riesling; International Eastern Wine Competition – 2005 Late Harvest Riesling (Double Gold); Los Angeles International Wine & Spirits Competition – 2007 Dry Riesling

Fenn Valley Vineyards

Great Lakes Great Wine Competition – 2007 Semi-Dry Riesling

Forty-Five North

Pacific Rim International Wine Competition – 2007 Dry Riesling (Best of Class White); Riverside International Wine Competition – 2007 Dry Riesling; Tasters Guild International Wine Competition – 2007 Dry Riesling

Left Foot Charley

Great Lakes Great Wine Competition – 2007 Dry Riesling

Peninsula Cellars

Riverside International Wine Competition – 2006 Sweet and Off-Dry Rieslings (both earned Chairman's Awards)

Shady Lane Cellars

Tasters Guild International Wine Competition – 2006 Semi-Dry Riesling

St. Julian Wine Company

Riverside International Wine Competition – 2006 St. J Semi-Dry Riesling and 2006 Off-Dry Riesling; Tasters Guild International Wine Competition – 2006 St. J Semi-Dry Riesling; Great Lakes Great Wine Competition – 2007 St. J. Semi-Dry Riesling; Florida State Fair International Wine Competition – 2006 Braganini Reserve Dry Riesling

Other gold medal winners are listed in the Awards section of the Web site of the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council, www.michiganwines.com.

The Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council is a 10-member panel that supports the growth of the grape and wine industry in Michigan. It is housed in the Agriculture Development Division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, which is the official state agency charged with preserving, promoting and protecting the food, agriculture and agricultural economic interests of the people of the state of Michigan.

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