



Wine and Dance at New Jersey Vineyard

Unionville Vineyards steeped in colonial history

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By ARUN KRISTIAN DAS | MyFox New York

MYFOXNY.COM - Located about 70 or so miles from New York City and 45 from Philadelphia, [Unionville Vineyards](#) , located on a gentle hill in lush Ringoes, N.J., balances historic and rustic charm with the required modern wine tourism marketing -- tastings, live music, and even dance lessons.



The tasting room, wine shop and tank room at Unionville Vineyards, Ringoes, N.J. (photos by Arun Kristian Das)

One of the unique offerings being held in that historic farmhouse is the wine and dance lesson series on certain weekends through the spring. A professional dance instructor, Cliff Marino, shows couples and dance partners salsa, bachata, tango, hustle, and the jitterbug.

"We started the dance events last winter and they were a huge success from day one," says Jennifer Tanner, Unionville's marketing director. "So many people want to learn how to dance and we found a way

to make it very affordable in a truly unique fun atmosphere."

After the 45-minute dance lesson, visitors taste five wines, which are made by winemaker Cameron Stark, who joined the staff in 2003 after studying at the University of California - Davis and making wines in California's Napa Valley.

"The decision to leave Napa was difficult -- honestly New Jersey was not among the top 50 states my wife or I planned to live or work in," Stark says. "The reward is in grappling with the challenge of the climate here and being in an industry that is only just beginning to understand what grapes it can grow, what grapes it should grow, and how to grow them in order to make excellent wine."

Stark crafts his wines from several grape varietals. But some of the winery's best-received creations are Stark's signature blends, some of which have eyebrow-raising names such as 2009 Gold Medal-winner "The Big O," a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc.

"It all boils down to the satisfaction of seeing the look on a savvy wine drinker's face change from complete disbelief and an 'Oh... do I have to?' look, and with a single sip change to slightly bewildered pleasure -- 'Hey, this is good,'" Stark says. "The disbelief remains but that will change in time."

Unionville is only one of several vineyards in the Delaware River Valley, giving local and road-tripper wine enthusiasts an alternative -- or at least an additional -- destination to Long Island's North Fork or the Finger Lakes in central New York.

The winery itself, which has been producing since 1987 (the first vines were planted in 1982), is on the site of an old peach farm. The barn and a nearby red-brick farmhouse with white window panes used for special events were built in 1858.



The historic mansion and winery at Unionville Vineyards, Ringoes, N.J. (photos by Arun Kristian Das)

Tanner hopes visitors to Unionville come back for more. She encourages people to bring a picnic and enjoy the scenery.

"It is very important to us that every visitor to our winery and vineyards have a wonderful memorable experience and when their visit is over, they leave here looking forward to their next visit with us," Tanner says.