

Tasting the Good Life on the Highlands Wine Trail

by Dr. Audrey Cross

The world was shocked in 1976 when a California wine topped France in an international blind-tasting competition. Unrivaled for centuries, wines from the New World were challenging its position. Today, New Jersey wines join the league of great wines made right here in our own backyard. So, dust off your picnic basket, wipe off your wine glasses and head out to taste the good life in the Highlands!

Day 1

Starting farthest east in Sussex County, you will find **Cava Winery** in the town of Hamburg. In an area once surrounded by mines, “cava” means cave in Italian. Visit during winter and you can also ski at nearby Vernon resorts.

Travel a bit west into Wantage to visit **Ventimiglia Winery**. Owners Anne and Gene Ventimiglia have been making wine for decades and have finally decided to share their talents. Their tasting room is inviting and friendly. You will feel like part of the family when you join Anne and Gene to taste their wines.

Next into Montague, NJ you will find **Westfall Winery**. With a colorful history that begins in the 1700s and continues with its legendary Morgan horses, Westfall offers a relaxing time sampling wines and visiting the historic grounds of this lovely farm with horses trotting the grounds.

Drop down just north of Route 80 in Columbia, to find **Brook Hollow Farm and Winery** which offers “Pick-your-own” peaches, apples and pumpkins. You can also enjoy their grape and fruit wines.

Day 2

Get an early start going east on Rt.80 to take CR519 South to **Four Sisters Winery**, just north of Belvidere. From corn maize to hayrides to grape stomping, murder mystery dinners and weddings, you will find many reasons to return again to Four Sisters.

Ramble on down Rt. 519 into historic Belvidere for a drive pass lacey porch Victorian houses, Italianate structures and the county’s seat offices. A central park makes this quiet little town a lovely retreat. Continue south on CR519 across Routes 57 and 22, then through the boro of Alpha.

When 519 joins CR627, continue ahead to find **Alba Vineyards**. One of the state’s largest vineyards, Alba offers jazz and blues sessions, weddings and an annual fireworks event where you can sample their wines while you enjoy a picnic, horse drawn carriage rides and live music.

On the same road, further west is **Villa Milagro Vineyards**. Meaning “the place or home of miracles,” Villa Milagro uses organic and sustainable viticulture practices to produces blended wines that highlight the best of each varietal yielding one-of-a-kind wines. Owner Dr. Audrey Cross, a renowned nutritionist,



will help you understand the health benefits as well as the pleasures of wine.

For your final stop on the Highlands Wine Trail, travel back east on CR627 into Bloomsbury then south on CR579 into Hunterdon County, passing one Star-Bangled borough after another until you reach Ringoes. There you will find **Unionville Winery**, housed in a barn built originally in 1858, where they pour their wines.

Exhausted and satiated, your taste of the good life in the Highlands will hopefully make you proud to boast to Californians, French and New Yorkers alike that indeed there are wines from Jersey... and mighty fine ones at that!

Dr. Audrey Cross, with husband Steve Gambino, owns Villa Milagro Vineyards. www.VillaMilagroVineyards.com

Cava Winery

www.cavawinery.com • (973) 823-9463
3619 New Jersey 94, Hamburg, NJ

Ventimiglia Winery

ventivines.com • (973) 875-4333
101 Layton Road, Wantage, NJ

Westfall Winery

westfallwinery.com • (973) 293-3428
141 Clove Road, Montague, NJ

Brook Hollow Farm and Winery

www.brookhollowwinery.com
52 Frog Pond Road, Columbia, NJ

Four Sisters Winery

www.foursisterswinery.com • (908) 475-3671
783 County Route 519, Belvidere, NJ

Alba Vineyard

www.albavineyard.com • (908) 995-7800
269 Warren Glen Road (County Road 627)
Milford, NJ 08848

Villa Milagro Vineyards

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