

WINE

Flying Fox Vineyard

King Montgomery



In the shadow of the Blue Ridge, just southeast of Waynesboro, nestled on the gentle slopes of Nelson County is the Flying Fox Vineyard, one of 23 fine wineries throughout the region that comprise the Monticello Viticultural Area (AVA). It is here that Lynn Davis and husband Rich Evans decided to retire, first to grow grapes for other wineries. Then, several years ago, they expanded operations to craft their own wines on premises.

Well, if this is retirement—they now produce over 25,000 bottles of wine a year—then I'd hate to see them really work! Growing varietal grapes, where Mother Nature rules in all her manifestations of good and bad, and turning the harvested fruit into excellent wines is not for those who envision retirement as sitting on a front porch rocking chair sipping coffee or mint juleps. But this is a labor of love, and Evans and Davis are up to the task—both worked long and hard in their previous lives, too.

Evans spent 25 years as an emergency-room physician at the Augusta

Medical Center in nearby Augusta County. Dr. Evans is used to long hours, numerous unique emergency situations and many stressful times, so he's a natural for the wine-growing and wine-making business. And Dr. Davis? She holds a PhD in anatomy and was dean and director of the Echols Scholar Program at the University of Virginia—that institution's elite undergraduate program. So she's a natural for the wine industry, too.

The vineyard is named after the running fox weathervane on the establishment's largest building. "It is a typical running fox weathervane, but after a hard day working on the vines and a glass of wine, he looks like he is flying above the vineyard," says the vineyard's Web site.

The Wines

The Flying Fox Vineyard is home to vines of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and

Petit Verdot. Viognier is grown by family members Jane and John Zieman at the Ridge Run Vineyard near Stuarts Draft in the Shenandoah Valley. Chardonnay is produced from quality grapes acquired from other growers.

With some trepidation I held a bottle of Flying Fox wine in each hand. The Viognier, I feared, would be cloyingly sweet, and the Rosé wine would taste more like soda pop than a good, crisp wine. I was very wrong on both counts.

The Viognier was quite dry, subtly fruity, very refreshing by itself and it stands up nicely to white-meat meals and semi-spicy dishes. My teriyaki-glazed silver (Coho) salmon was all the better for its presence. The 2009 Viognier won a Silver Medal at the 2010 Virginia Wine Classic, and a prestigious Gold Medal at the 2010 Virginia State Fair.

I've always distrusted Rosés,



Lynn Davis and Rich Evans among their grapevines; they truly love tending the plants throughout the year.

Flying Fox Vineyard has a fine lineup of excellent wines.



having been let down more than once. Somehow removing the skin from perfectly good red grapes and fermenting the remaining naked fruit seems to make for a diminished product—the last two bottles of allegedly good Rosé that I bought went down the drain after one sip. This Rosé, though, nicely chilled, was dry, smooth, had character and form and provided a welcome relief from the late summer heat; and it paired wonderfully with lightly breaded pan-seared quail, wild rice with a hint of garlic and pureed butternut squash with onions.

Petit Verdot, one of Bordeaux's classic black grapes, can be blended or vinted as a stand-alone red wine. The 2007 vintage was absolutely great, and complements a number of red meats and hardy cheeses. I can't recommend this wine highly enough. It took a Silver Medal at the 2010 Monticello Cup Wine Competition, and a Gold Medal at the 2010 Virginia Wine Classic.

The vineyard also offers a superb Cabernet Franc—this grape does particularly well in the Monticello AVA; a Fox White, which is a slightly sweeter version of the Viognier; Trio, a Bordeaux-like blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot; and Fox Red, a Cabernet Franc/Merlot blend that is semi-dry, has nice tannins and holds up nicely to strong flavors such as those found in bleu cheese and barbeque.

The 2007 Trio is a limited-production, classically styled wine, aged in American and French oak for 18 months. It won a number of high honors in competitions including a Gold Medal at the 2010 Monticello Cup and a Platinum Medal at the 2010 Virginia Wine Classic.

Evans and Davis are very proud of what they do, and judging by the

impressive list of medals and other kudos their wines have received, they well should be. They believe that great wines come from great grapes, and they both love to grow the delectable fruit. The more time and effort expended in the vineyards, the better the wine. So now, instead of just growing grapes for others to use, Evans and Davis, with the able assistance of well-known winemaker Emily Pelton, craft some of the finest wines in the Old Dominion.

Flying Fox Vineyard Information

The Flying Fox Tasting Room is open Friday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., March through December. It is open every day in October, but is closed in January and February. The wines always are available for sale online at www.FlyingFoxVineyard.com. Call (434) 361-1692 for more information on the wines and vineyard events.

Davis and Evans say on their Web site, "Bring a picnic, share a glass of wine with friends and family, and enjoy the views from our patio. Hope to see you soon."

Photos courtesy of Flying Fox Vineyard

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This article can be found in the
April/May issue of

Virginia Sportsman

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