



Ashley Guinn (right) is ready to taste some Minnesota wines. Charlie Quast pours Frontenac Gris for her to try.

Journey into Minnesota WINE COUNTRY

There's more than meets the eye at Fieldstone Vineyards

By Edell Fiedler

I'm a wine lover. That's right, pour me a good glass of the aromatic liquid, and I'm likely to have another. When I'm feeling rambunctious, I might just add one more before calling it quits.

However, being a wine lover certainly does not make me a connoisseur. I can't say that I don't try.

In my quest for finding great-tasting wines to add to my wine cooler, I am always up for trying something different. So is my sister, Ashley Guinn, who is also a wine buff like me. We decided to visit Fieldstone Vineyards, 38577 State Hwy. 68, near Morgan, Minn.

When we arrived, we saw a lone house, a large dairy barn and a plot of grape vines growing to the right side of the barn. This was not exactly the type of winery Guinn had in mind. She had pictured fields of grape vines, people lounging on patio chairs, music wafting through

the air. I told her to forget the movie images she had playing in her mind and to be ready to experience something new.

I opened the door, and we left the farm scene behind us and found ourselves in a sophisticated, yet welcoming, spacious room. Various white and red wines filled the shelves that align the room's walls. Wine bottles dangled in climbing wine tendrils (racks) that hung from the ceiling. Canned foods from local growers were on display along with homemade notepads and cards from area artists. Homemade, colorful soy candles sat atop the shelves bearing the name of the scents they harbored within their glass jars including strawberry margarita, harvest spice and

mulberry. Straight in front of us was the wine bar. That's where we headed.

Co-owner Charlie Quast had the bottles and glasses ready to go as well as a special treat of cheese and crackers. Quast says this is something that he and co-owner Mark Wedge plan on incorporating this year as part of their Tours and Tasting, which is held every weekend through December. The cheese was delicious and paired up well with many of the wines that we tried. Quast took us from one end of the wine spectrum to the other, starting with the whites and working down to the reds. Both of our tasting cards were full by the time we had gotten through the list. Stars marked our favorites, but not all of them agreed with our taste buds.

This fully met Quast's prerequisite. "You don't have to like anything." He and co-owner Mark Wedge want people to have a relaxing

experience during their wine tasting and to be honest with what they like and what they don't like. "We're in a dairy barn in Southern Minnesota," Quast says. "We have a lowbrow, casual atmosphere. It's perfectly ok to like all, some, or even none."

After our wine tasting, Guinn and I browsed the wine selections, homemade selected food, art and candles. I left with a bottle of my favorite wine and a harvest spice candle. Guinn also left with a bottle of her favorite wine and plans to go back to Fieldstone Vineyards with a group of friends. So, which wines were among our favorites? Both of our palettes were pleased with many of the wines. But we settled on the Frontenac Gris and the Frontenac Rosé . . . just for now. After all, it gives us another reason to go back for another wine tasting to find more favorites to take home. [Mn](#)

Why you should go

- Save yourself a trip to California's wineries and vineyards. This winery is Southern Minnesota.
- Fieldstone Vineyards is unique in that it is housed in a renovated dairy barn. Plus, it's located on a Minnesota Century Farm.
- Experience a casual wine tasting atmosphere. Jeans and sneakers are ok.
- Try a unique array of Fieldstone Vineyard wines that use 100 percent Minnesota grown grapes. You're bound to find one that you like.
- Take part in a wine tasting for only \$3 and have the owners personally walk you through the wine tasting process. Talk about one-on-one customer service.
- Take a free tour of the winery and learn more about Fieldstone Vineyards' winemaking process from start to finish.
- See if Fieldstone Vineyards is the place for your next event. They have had groom's dinners, holiday parties and reserved large group tastings.
- Watch the grape harvest this fall.

You can't grow grapes in Minnesota

by *The Wine-ing Farmer*

Growing wine quality grapes in Minnesota is impossible . . . right?

Not so. In fact, over the past 15 years, great strides have been made to prove this "theory" incorrect. Two bodies of work, one by the University of Minnesota and the other by the late Elmer Swenson, are hard at work in vineyards all over Southern Minnesota, providing for an ever increasing number of wineries and wine quality grapes.

Don't look for Cabernet, Chardonnay, Reisling or any other run-of-the-mill vinifer, as they won't (or more appropriately can't) grow in this climate to the extent that they can be commercially harvested. In Minnesota, grape vines need to withstand temperatures below zero degrees, have good disease resistance and ripen off grapes at the end of summer.

Some of the varieties of Minnesota wine-quality grapes include Frontenac, St. Pepin, LaCrescent, LaCrosse, St. Croix, Frontenac Gris and Marquette. What's more, the wine being made from them is more than drinkable – it's enjoyable!

Finding these Minnesota wines will prove less challenging because Minnesota wineries are on the rise. What started as a small group of wineries just 8-10 years ago, there will be almost 30 wineries to visit this year. A number of them can be found in Southern Minnesota including Fieldstone Vineyards (Morgan), Glacial Ridge Winery (Spicer), Hinterland Vineyard and Winery (Clara City), Morgan Creek Winery (New Ulm) and Olde Country Winery (Lake Lillian).

The next time you're on the road and you see a break in the never-ending fields of corn, soybeans and sugar beets, it might just be a vineyard.

A complete listing for all Minnesota wineries can be found at mngrapes.org.



Ramsey Falls

While you're there

If you're in this part of Southern Minnesota, make some time to visit the state's largest municipal park, the Alexander Ramsey Park in Redwood Falls. The park features include:

- Walking and biking trails
- A view of Ramsey Falls
- Picnicking and play areas
- Ramsey Park Zoo