

Making Wine in Michigan

Winemaking principles and procedures are less regionally specific than wine grape cultivation; therefore, a wider range of global reference materials is applicable to winemaking in Michigan. Michigan's winemakers have received their training in a number of ways:

- 🍷 home winemakers whose operations have grown to commercial-scale production (self-taught)
- 🍷 winemakers who have been trained at respected educational institutions around the world
- 🍷 winemakers who have completed PhDs in Horticulture at MSU, specializing in wine grape production and learning winemaking concurrently at the research facilities in East Lansing
- 🍷 winemakers who have apprenticed with other winemakers.

As a fermented product using yeast, wine can be made from any number of source materials – honey, dandelions, cherries, and many varieties of grapes. The choice of styles of wine to make is determined by the winemaker or winery owner. Factors to consider include:

- 🍷 personal preferences
- 🍷 anticipated consumer demand
- 🍷 business objectives
- 🍷 interest in entering competitions
- 🍷 fruit/juice available

Wineries that wish to gain national or international recognition for quality wine production from a particular region (appellation) must meet certain requirements. The main requirement is that the majority of the wine produced must be from fruit grown in that appellation. It is possible to purchase fruit, juice, juice concentrate and even finished wine from locations well beyond the local regional boundaries. However, it is the cultivation of fruit locally that contributes the regional character and vintage variations



Making Wine in Michigan

that makes a regional wine distinctive and appreciated by consumers and influential wine experts. A federal government agency — Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (www.ttb.gov) — issues required winery licenses, designates production standards, collects federal alcohol taxes and regulates the labeling of wine, including how the origin of the fruit used to make the wine is indicated on the wine label.

Michigan's wineries have demonstrated for more than 80 years that quality wines can be produced in the Great Lakes State from fruit grown locally. The challenge for the continued growth of the industry is to find ways to increase production volume of the very best wines, and find greater economic sustainability of the industry when increased production costs are often required to obtain the premium quality that is desired.

Numerous references are available to assist the winery owner in designing a winery facility. Laboratory facilities are an important part of the winery operation.

An important factor in determining the location of the winery and/or tasting room is whether the facility will be open to the public for touring and tasting. If access to the winery by a large number of leisure travelers is desired, a location should be chosen where there is significant tourism traffic. The Council's information regarding counties that may hold the greatest potential for winery development, based on climate, topography and tourism traffic criteria, may serve as a useful guide.

