



INDIANAPOLIS BUSINESS JOURNAL

ONLINE

Home	Contact IBJ	Article Search	Send Info for Publication	Editorial Calendar
Subscriptions	Newsstand Locations	Advertising Info	Contract Services	Other Publications

Farming for tourists on the rise

Wine trails find followers

By Scott Olson solson@ibj.com

A bottle of white, a bottle of red...

Whether you prefer a Chardonnay or Merlot, or you're simply trying to recall the opening lyrics to "Scenes From an Italian Restaurant," one thing is certain: Indiana wineries are hardly withering on the vine.

The Hoosier State now boasts 32 wineries and should add two more by the end of fall, according to the Indiana Wine Grape Council at Purdue University.

Moreover, the winemakers are helping drive the state's fledgling agri-tourism efforts.

"Nobody wants to tour a hog farm, but they want to experience a vineyard," said Jeanette Merritt, the council's marketing director. "Drinking wine is now—quote, unquote—the cool thing to do."

Indeed, the number of wine producers in Indiana has nearly quadrupled since 1989, the year the General Assembly approved a tax on all wine sales to launch the council and support the cottage industry.

The decision has fermented well. In 2004, Indiana wineries produced 437,000 tons, good enough for 18th place among all states, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The wineries now are using their strength in numbers to collaborate on promotional opportunities. The most visible result is the state's three wine trails travelers can traipse to sip Chambourcin or Vignoles, two types of wine popular in Indiana.

The Indiana Uplands Wine Trail encompasses the southwestern part of the state, the Down The Lazy River Wine Trail the southeast portion, and the Indy Wine Trail the central region.

The seven winemakers composing the Indiana Uplands stretch from Bloomington to nearly Louisville and organized about three years ago. Lazy River, featuring six wineries, and the Indy trail, with seven, both formed within the past few months.

Dana Huber of the Huber Winery in Starlight near New Albany said she thinks the affiliations make sense.

"Seven wineries can accomplish more on one budget than they can on their own," she said. "The impetus was to promote agri-tourism and to really inform people about wines in Indiana."

Participants of the three trails can get their "passports" punched at each stop and receive a prize upon completion. The Indiana Uplands grand-prize winner this year received a \$600 refrigerated wine cabinet.

Membership fees paid by the participating wineries, and state and federal grants, help fund prizes and promotional programs. To wean themselves from the grants, Indiana Uplands' members are courting bed and breakfasts and restaurants to join as associate members. They hope to make that step by the start of next year.

The number of Indiana Uplands passports distributed during the trail's existence has climbed from 10,000 to 14,000, Huber said. While the majority of visitors are from Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Illinois, travelers from 36 states have signed the guest books.

Organizers of the Indy trail have recruited the Edinburgh Premium Outlets mall as a partner and receive assistance from the Columbus Convention Center, which staffs their toll-free phone number.

They also are hopeful the convention centers in the six other counties represented on the trail will support their efforts as well, said Meredith Easley, owner of the Easley Winery in downtown Indianapolis.

Two months into the coalition, she is pleased with the progress.

Said Easley: "We have big things planned."

The state's Department of Tourism can certainly raise a glass to that.

-



RE



The map displays the state of Indiana with major interstate highways (65, 70, 74, 31, 69, 50, 64, 37, 72) and several wine trails marked with numbered circles. The trails are:

- Indy Wine Trail:** Locations 1-7 are clustered around Indianapolis and Columbus.
- Indiana Uplands Wine Trail:** Locations 1-7 are spread across the northern and central parts of the state, including Bloomington, Bedford, French Lick, Bristow, Corydon, and Starlight.
- Down the Lazy River Wine Trail:** Locations 1-6 are located in the southern part of the state, including Batesville, Guilford, Madison, and Vevay.

Indy Wine Trail

1. Ferrins Fruit Winery, Carmel
2. Grape Inspirations Winery, Carmel
3. Chateau Thomas Winery, Plainfield
4. Easley Winery, Indianapolis
5. Buck Creek Winery, Indianapolis
6. Mallow Run Winery, Bargersville
7. Simmons Winery, Columbus

Indiana Uplands Wine Trail

1. Butler Winery, Bloomington
2. Oliver Winery, Bloomington
3. Carousel Winery, Bedford
4. French Lick Winery, French Lick
5. Winzerwald Winery, Bristow
6. Turtle Run Winery, Corydon
7. Huber Winery, Starlight

Down the Lazy River Wine Trail

1. Ertel Cellars Winery, Batesville
2. Chateau Pomije, Guilford
3. Lanthier Winery, Madison
4. Madison Vineyards, Madison
5. Thomas Family Winery, Madison
6. Ridge Winery, Vevay

24IBJ/2006/07/31



Photo courtesy: Easley Winery

Easley Winery in downtown Indianapolis, a member of the Indy Wine Trail, hosts frequent events, often with live music during warm weather to promote itself.

Copyright (c) IBJ Corp. 2006. All Rights Reserved. Privacy Policy
Reproduction or use without permission of editorial or graphic content in any manner is strictly prohibited.
Reprint orders To request reprint permission contact IBJ's managing editor.
Phone: 317-634-6200 -- E-mail: managingeditor@ibj.com