

Book Reviews

Author, Title	Reviewer
Bart Jackson <i>Garden State Wineries Guide: The Traveler's Handbook to the Wineries and Vineyards of New Jersey</i>	George M. Taber
Evan Dawson <i>Summer in a Glass: The Coming of Age of Winemaking in the Finger Lakes</i>	Jacob R. Straus
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BART JACKSON: *Garden State Wineries Guide: The Traveler's Handbook to the Wineries and Vineyards of New Jersey*, Wine Appreciation Guild, San Francisco, 2011, 156 pp., ISBN: 978-1934259573 (paperback), \$14.95.

The dust jacket for the first volume of Thomas Penney's excellent book *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition* has a picture of a group of men and boys around a wine barrel pouring glasses of wine from unlabeled bottles. Several of the men wear period beards, moustaches and goatees. It's a jovial group that looks as if they had just put in a hard day in the harvest. The caption on the back says they are "enjoying the sparkling wine for which the firm was noted." The date given is 1906. The picture was taken at the Renault Winery in Egg Harbor City, New Jersey.

While much of the wine world thinks all American wine comes from California, Oregon, and Washington, it is now produced in every state in the union, including Alaska and North Dakota. That doesn't mean Texas or Rhode Island wine is made from grapes grown in those states. Many wineries buy grapes, unfermented juice, or even finished wine from California and then simply finish the winemaking

process, if necessary, and bottle it as their state's wine. Shipping conditions have improved greatly since Dust Bowl days, when in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* the California produce was destroyed during transport after ice melted.

Bart Jackson has now written a useful tourist's guide to the wineries of New Jersey, which calls itself the Garden State but has a much less glamorous reputation based largely on visitors' transient impressions from the New Jersey Turnpike. The state is more than a toll road, and it didn't get its name for nothing. This is the birthplace of Campbell's Soup because good and abundant tomatoes grow there. It's also home to some of the best blueberries in the country. One of the first American planned communities was Vineland in southern New Jersey, which was started in 1861. Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch lived there and founded Welch's Fruit Juice Company with the goal of making a non-alcoholic wine.

According to Pinney, the first vineyards were planted in New Jersey just before the American Revolution. Inspired by monetary awards offered by the Philadelphia branch of the London Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacturers, and Commerce, farmers planted vineyards in the nearby province of New Jersey. Edward Antill put in his first French and Italian vines in 1764 near the present-day city of New Brunswick. Pinney says Antill later wrote the "first specifically American treatise on viticulture." It was entitled, "An Essay on the Cultivation of the Vine, and the Making of Wine, Suited to the Different Climates of North-America."

If truth were told, many of the wines made in the forty-seven states not named California, Washington, and Oregon are not very good. I have tasted many at wine competitions, but I didn't sample many that I would buy. They are more interesting for their curiosity, and remind me of Dr. Johnson's blatantly sexist remark about women preachers: "A woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." I find Idaho or Arizona wines interesting because they actually exist.

Having lived in New Jersey for twenty-six years, I have tasted the state's wines over a long time and watched their development from mostly bad to sometimes interesting and even quite good. Wine is made in the state from the very bottom near Cape May, which is south of the Mason-Dixon line, to the far northwest, where the climate in winter resembles New England. Nature is kindest in the area known as the Outer Coastal Plain, which goes east to west from the Atlantic Ocean to near Philadelphia on the west and from Cape May in the south to Asbury Park. It's now an official American Viticultural Area. Wine is also made in Warren Hills and Central Delaware Valley further north.

Many fruits grow well in the Outer Coastal Plain, and some farmers unfortunately make wine out of everything but grapes. Consumers will find lots of products made from blueberries and a host of other exotic ingredients. Those are frankly not very exciting and usually sweet. Too many winemakers are also using

hybrid grapes such as Foch that can survive the winters. I personally don't like them.

A few New Jersey wineries, though, are making outstanding wines. The problem is that there are not enough of them. Perhaps the best of the over achievers is Amalthea Cellars in Atco. Founder Louis Caracciolo, who has an Italian heritage and a scientific education, planted his first grapes in 1976. He also owns a house in France and is a serious student of that country's wine technology. Amalthea's Legend wines are blends of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc, that are admitted copies of great French reds: Château Palmer, Château Margaux, and Château Latour. They can hold their own with the best in the world and have done so in blind tastings.

Wine tourism is a vital part of the business plans for all the wineries not located in California, Oregon, and Washington. Major distributors won't handle minor brands, so they have to survive thanks to cellar-door sales and the few local stores that will carry them. That's why Bart Jackson's book is important because it may help bring in some wine tourists. The Wine Appreciation Guild, a San Francisco company that has a long list of wine books, distributes the New Jersey guide. I hope this will be the first in a series about visiting wineries in other states.

My only critique is that the author is too much of a gentleman and doesn't give candid recommendations for wineries to visit from the point of view of either the quality of the wines or wine tourism. By careful reading between the lines, a visitor gets hints, but I hope future editions of this book and other state guides will include a Michelin-star system that tells the tourist that a winery is very good, worth a detour, or merits a special trip.

George M. Taber
Wine Writer, Block Island, RI

EVAN DAWSON: *Summer in a Glass: The Coming of Age of Winemaking in the Finger Lakes*. Sterling Epicure, New York, 2011, 266 pp., ISBN 978-1-4027-7825-4, \$19.95.

Wine books generally focus on the author's personal wine experiences (Lynch, 1990), a grape variety (Kliman, 2010), a winery (Weiss, 2005), a wine region (Kladstrup and Kladstrup, 2006), or an event (Taber, 2005). Alternatively wine books often discuss the history of wine (Pellechia, 2006) or wine's role in a socio-cultural event (Kladstrup and Kladstrup, 2001). While books about any of these single topics can make for a good read, when an author is able to combine the best of all wine book genres into one volume the book becomes a must read.