



I could easily tell you to go look in the "Music" or "Alternative Music" section of that daily newspaper competitor of this fine publication to find out what is going on at the **Madrona Hill Winery** in North Portland. But, I think you would be better served by finding out first that Madrona Hill produces, as they have for years, some very nice wine.

Madrona Hill Winery (formerly both Madrona View Winery and Madrona View Cellars) moved to its current locale last November. It is set in the semi-industrial area of North Portland best known previously for The White Eagle and the Widmere Brewing Co. Until the recent change of scenery and scene they had been housed at Amity Vineyards. (In a shocking display of synergy I wrote about Amity last month while planning on reviewing Madrona this month, not knowing the link these two wineries share. The owners, Mikey Jones of Madrona and Myron Redford of Amity, even look alike although Mikey definitely fights in a different weight class.)

As soon as they moved they decided to do something with the vast space a winery demands. Their first batch of wine at this location will be made in a month or so. For the past 9 months they have temporarily run one of the wildest all ages, alternative local music venues in the city. Instead of aging Pinot noir, Cabernet and Chardonnay, the winery has been rocked by bands like Sissy Face, Ancient Youth, the Pitts Drunks, 5 Fingers of Funk, the Crookpots, Pravn, Kid Unconscious and many more.

But as I say there is far more to this winery than an active nightlife of Portland's "Generation X" (I love using that term because it is so incredibly non-descript and irrelevant). If you go to the winery's tasting room at 4124 N. Mississippi (open Fridays 12-7, Saturdays and Sundays from 12-6 and occasionally on Mondays after 3) you will quickly find out that Mikey Jones is a winemaker first and an alternative music promoter, well, way down there on the list. He has admittedly made mistakes since jumping into the nightlife scene and he's been burned a few times, but he has learned the advertising game, developed an increasing number of regulars, learned to appreciate Ska bands and be a belated patron of the consciously weird arts.

This place is a winery Portland should be proud to be the home of. Oh, it's not fancy or trendy and its willingness to take chances with their winery and their wines probably set a few people's noses askew (Radical Chic is gone. Come back to the five and dime, Thomas Wolfe, Thomas Wolfe). But if you sit down and allow yourself to take a tour through its wines you will realize that Madrona Hill is a place deserving of notice.

Mikey makes at least 10 different wine varietals so you have a lot of choices. This fact also limits my ability to tell you about all of their wines because the good editor has asked me to cut down in length, especially this month since I turned this in terribly late. I am trying to oblige. If there is a wine you like, be it Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot noir, etc. Mikey probably has it stashed away somewhere.

1992 Cabernet Sauvignon is a great place to start, or finish for that matter. Like any Cabernet this young it needs some time in the bottle. Oh sure, it's totally drinkable now. It's fairly rich already, hints at depth and is smooth with a good blend of tannins on the finish, but time will do wonders for it. Buy a few bottles and drink a couple each year and watch it blow your mind around the turn of the century.

Madrona Hill makes two very interesting sparkling wines. An Oregon Spumante and a Blanc de Noir. The Spumante is made from Muscat so it is fairly sweet, but finishes up dry on the finish. Don't confuse this nice wine with that Andre's, Ballinger's or Tott's crap that is hocked on TV starting in a month or so. This is a wine that would do well any time of year, especially now on a warm summer/fall evening. Blanc de Noir is a raspberry tinted wine, both in color and taste. This is a very crisp, dry wine that makes for interesting drinking. This sparkler would stand up alone or do well with sweet, fruity desserts.

The other two wines I found to be of note are the 1992 Late Harvest Gewurztraminer and the Port. The Late Harvest Gewurtz nearly defies explanation. It exhibits both the quality of a spicy Gewurztraminer and a powerfully sweet and heavy dessert wine. I would suspect a dessert with a heavy cinnamon flavor would go very nicely with this wine. Port, no argument, it is an acquired taste. Mikey says he makes about 100 cases a year and they sell out in about 2 weeks. Unfortunately there was none left for me to try. This is obviously not stopping me from giving a recommendation. I like Port, don't quite know why because I don't know much about it, I just do. Mikey was the first and one of the small handful of Oregon wineries that crafts this beverage. Soon he'll be coming out with another batch so keep attentive to the local wine newspapers and find out when he's going to have it available.

Give yourself an opportunity to go there before barrels fill the space they have set aside for the stage and the dance floor. I would advise finding a show you would be interested seeing there and go. It is a great place for loud, lively music. Not only is the space huge, it is filled with multimedia art designed by people with some funky outlooks on the world. Behind the stage is a huge mural that is purely "Where The Wild Things Are" - meets - Timothy Leary. This mural was done by Spider Moccasin. Imagine if Maurice Sendak had taken a lot more acid than he was already on and you get the picture. In the courtyard outside tables are set amongst post-industrial sculptures. Not your ordinary winery stuff, but a cool change of pace from tasting rooms filled with herbed mayonnaise and bottle wicks.

We are blessed to live in an area that provides the climate necessary to produce fine wine. We are equally blessed that there are people in the world like Mikey Jones, Myron Redford, Richard Mansfield and more that make wine because it is something that calls to their souls rather than their wallets. These people all want to make money at what they do, and they richly deserve to do so. The fact that they do it without selling out who they are, their integrity or their beliefs is something special. Kind of like the guy who started this paper. Salute businesses like Madrona Hill Winery by going to the tasting room, buying a case and raising a glass to their longevity. You can do it right there on the beach too, because both local wine shops (in Cannon Beach) carry a limited selection of Madrona's wines.

**Recommended Winery Tour for September:** Expand your concept of the wine country. Take in three Portland wineries and find out that within the confines of our fair city there are real wineries. Madrona Hill is purportedly the hardest to find, but all you need to do is go down Martin Luther King Blvd, head west on Russell, turn left on Mississippi and you're there. Adams Winery is located at 1920 NW Pettugrove and they are open every day from 11-5 including an after hours event they do each Friday from 5-7 where they break out some special Chardonnays and some hors d'oeuvres. The third and newest winery is Starr & Brown located at 10610 NW St. Helen's Road and open from 11-6 on Saturdays and Sundays. Give these places a whirl and pick up some good wines without having to head over the hills. Please tell them you read about them in The Edge. It just kills me when people tell me they went because they read here about a winery and didn't mention the fact. You know who you are.

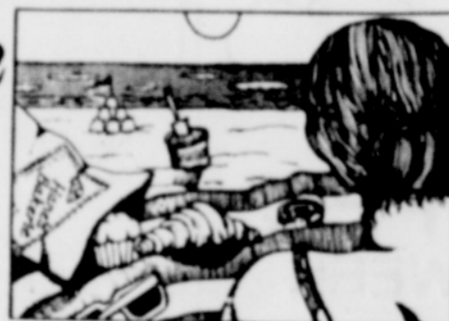


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It seems necessary to completely shed the old skin before the new, brighter, stronger, more beautiful one can emerge... I never thought I'd be getting a life lesson from a snake! Julie Ridge