

Maple Ridge Vineyard

James and Patricia Iubelt

Maple Ridge Vineyard began in Thompson, Ohio in 1994. The estate vineyard (wines are produced from estate grapes) is certified organic to national standards. Quality proven varietal clones, our unique micro-climate, reduced yields and European processes allow us to produce unique, high quality wines. These wines experience a slow, seasonal malo-lactic fermentation to balance the wine's acidity with the wine's alcohol and fruit. All wines are bottled "unfiltered" to retain more intense flavors. Located on a tree-lined country road, Maple Ridge offers a winetasting room (opened in 2001) that seats 20 to 30 people comfortably. During each November we release a new Reserve Wine (aged in French Oak) and offer gourmet-quality Navajo-Churro baby lamb meat for the holidays. The winemaking practices follow organic practices except for the addition of sulfites to the wines.

Farm Operations

Maple Ridge Vineyard is a diversified, organic certified farm that is more a lifestyle than a method of production. The farm depends on a synergistic environment where all of the farm activities contribute to the entire operation. The wine is processed in stainless steel and Burgundian French Oak, exclusively to preserve the flavors of the Western Reserve terroir. Site location and cultivation, clone selection and canopy management, mechanical weed control, fruit thinning and intensive pruning help amplify the flavors of The Ridge's clay terroir in Maple Ridge Vineyard wines. Varieties produced include Colmar-Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Gris, Riesling, and Pinot Noir. Wine quality is enhanced with European winemaking practices: no chemicals, fruit yields less than 2 tons per acre, season-long malo-lactic fermentation, unfiltered bottling and proper bottle aging (typically 6 mo's to a year or more).

Beyond the wine, Navajo-Churro sheep, Rhode Island Red hens, Alpine Goats, Italian Honey Bees, and selected mixed vegetables round out the edibles. Horses, wolfhounds and Maine Coone's help to balance the enjoyment aspects of the farm with the requirements for fertilizer and rodent and pest control.

The Navajo-Churro sheep are very special, since only two to three thousand of these sheep are accounted for today in the U.S. When the Spaniards invaded the western part of North America, they brought the Churro sheep from home for clothing, food and company. In the Southwestern part of the U.S., the Churro found the Navajo sheep of the Navajo Indian tribes and the integration is now history. A smaller animal than most of its peers, the Navajo-Churro is the finest gourmet baby lamb meat in the world, and the exceptionally low yields of meat per animal produce holiday quality meat. The fleece from the Navajo-Churro is prized for its high content of lanolin oil.

While the livestock requires diligent attention, they contribute to the peaceful atmosphere of screaming children, swearing parents and wild loose horses, which rein terror on everything on 20 acres. Humor aside, however, we really enjoy all of the wonderful harmony the farm brings to our family.

After the farm experience, come the rewards—emotional enjoyment, family togetherness, extended social interaction and, of course, the sharing of the product with others. At the North Union Farmers Market at Shaker Square in Cleveland, we are able share the wonderful results of the farm efforts with people who enjoy them and appreciate the fact that they are grown close-to-home and delivered fresh.