

Eat, drink and be merry

New Hampshire Wine Week overflows with tastings, events, more

By **MOIRA MCCARTHY**

When it comes to experiencing the world of wine, both oenophiles and the world's top winemakers know where to go: France, Italy, Napa and ... Manchester, N.H.

No lie. New Hampshire Wine Week, this year from Jan. 20 to 26 in Manchester and across the state, has become a top draw, bringing in more than 60 of the world's best known winemakers and thousands of wine enthusiasts for a week of tastings, pairing dinners, meetups and a "Winter Wine Spectacular."

New Hampshire Wine Week started 16 years ago when Nicole Brassard Jordan, the New Hampshire Liquor Commission director of marketing, merchandising, warehousing and sales, wanted to do something to help Easterseals, which had helped so much as she cared for her aging and ill grandmother.

"My sister asked me to do a talk on wine for women, and to have it benefit Easterseals," she said. "Given all they had done for me, I said yes." That first event drew in about 50 people, but their

passion got Brassard Jordan thinking; there's more to be done here. Today, the event spans the state and draws in thousands, and has raised millions of dollars for Easterseals.

Famed winemakers Gina Gallo and Jean-Charles **Boisset**, a married couple with twin 7-year-old daughters who seldom have time to travel to such events together, will be there in tandem this year (a treat for anyone who knows wine). French-born Boisset says New Hampshire speaks to his passions.

"New Hampshire represents freedom," he said. "Look at the state motto: Live Free or Die. It's so fun to be able to believe in this — that sense of where everything is vivacious and daring, where you truly are free."

Gallo, who has attended before, urged her husband to make the trip with her. "The shops and the people there are just so warm and so excited," she said. "The enthusiasm behind wine is amazing." She loved grabbing breakfast at cozy New Hampshire spots during the week, and experiencing New Hampshire life. "It comes back to the people,"

she said.

The week of events includes the rare public appearance by the couple, who come from two of the world's marquee wine families, at "Cellar Notes — Wine Dynasties: The Boisset and Gallo Families" on Jan. 23, from 5:30 to 8 p.m., at the Puritan Conference Center, 245 Hooksett Road, Manchester. Gallo and Boisset will offer their favorite wines, discuss their diverse winemaking styles and share personal anecdotes. And, of course, they'll offer tastings.

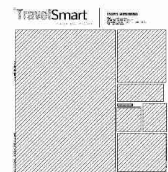
Guests can take in so much more, too, including four wine-pairing dinners in different spots across the state, tastings at New Hampshire wine distribution stores statewide, where the winemakers will be on hand to chat and share some of their favorite wines. In total, more than 7,000 wines will be available.

The centerpiece is the Easterseals Winter Wine Spectacular on Jan. 24, from 6 to 9 p.m., at the Double-Tree by Hilton Manchester Downtown (previously the Manchester Downtown Hotel) at 700 Elm St. Along with more than 1,800 wines for sampling, the event features delicious local fare, a silent auction and raffle, the Bellman Cellar Select VIP tasting room, and the chance to meet and learn from more than 60 internationally known wine personalities.

Tickets for the Grand Tasting are \$65 per person, and tickets providing access to the Grand Tasting and Bellman's Cellar Select cost \$135 per person.

Many hotels across the state have specials during the week as well, including the Christmas Farm Inn (3 Blitzen Way, Jackson), where a wine dinner will be held.

"It's a huge team effort, and it's wonderful. It's wonderful for the Easterseals, for people who love wine or want to learn to love wine



and for New Hampshire
itself," Brassard Jordan said.

To learn more about Wine
Week events, go to nhwine-week.com.