

MEET VIRGINIA

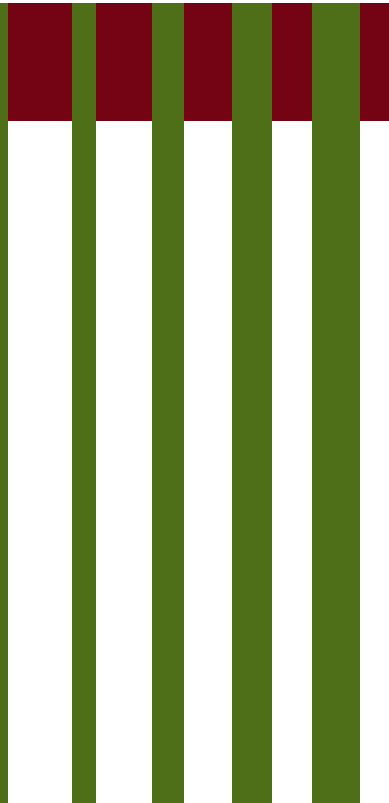


KELLY MAGYARICS

In a forward-thinking area rich with historical importance, where ingenuity and innovation have coexisted with longstanding traditions and deep-seated beliefs, success eluded would-be vintners for centuries. Despite a requirement that every male settler plant and tend at least 10 vines, Jamestown colo-

nists couldn't establish a wine industry. George Washington tried and failed to start a vineyard at Mount Vernon. Most famously (and perhaps most discouraging), Francophile and enophile Thomas Jefferson cultivated European varietals at Monticello for more than 30 years without producing a single bottle of wine.

Photos by Kelly Magyarics (left), Kenneth Garrett (right)



Kelly Magyarics is a wine-and-spirits writer and wine educator based in northern Virginia. She can be reached through her website, www.kellymagyarics.com, or at www.twitter.com/kmagyarics.

Flash forward 400 years. Today, the state of Virginia boasts 160 wineries, compared to only 46 in 1995. Wine sales for the year ending June 30 were up nearly 13% over the previous year. Viognier and Cabernet Franc are emerging as the state’s varietal stars; Bordeaux blends, sparkling wines, and a quirky indigenous grape also attract their share of attention. If you haven’t already made her acquaintance, meet Virginia—and her wines.

Political distinctions

Considering the entire state as one wine-making region would be as inaccurate as making broad generalizations about California wine. “Virginia as a whole is a huge area to be assumed as one viticultural region,” explains Jordan Harris, winemaker and general manager for Tarara Winery in Leesburg. Indeed, six of the 187 American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) are found in the state:

Eastern Shore, Monticello, Northern Neck George Washington Birthplace, North Fork of Roanoke, Rocky Knob, and Shenandoah Valley (which extends into West Virginia). Harris points out that as wineries are built closer to one another, establishing wine trails and marketing initiatives, they



Barboursville Vineyards tasting room (left); Boxwood Winery estate in The Plains (top).