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Seven N.S. wineries create Tidal Bay brand

Province's first appellation wine established

By BILL SPURR Features Writer

Seven of Nova Scotia's wineries have banded together to create the Tidal Bay brand, each creating one wine within guidelines set by an independent committee.

"It's the first appellation wine for Nova Scotia," said Jurg Stutz, winemaker at Domaine de Grand Pre. "Basically, what that means is the wine comes with a set of standards.

"Within the winery association, there was a technical committee that put the standards together, the overall style of the product. What we were looking for was lower alcohol, a little bit off-dry, aromatic, good, crisp acidity and things like that."

Seven wineries — Benjamin Bridge, Blomidon Estate, Jost, Gaspereau, Domaine de Grand Pre, Petite Riviere and Avondale Sky — are taking part in the Tidal Bay program. Some have already launched the wines, others are about to do so. The standards for the wines include what varieties of grapes can be used.

"Some varieties can be used up to 100 per cent, for example, L'Acadie Blanc, Seyval Blanc, you can use 100 per cent, if you decide to," Stutz said. "Other varieties, like the Muscat, you can only use up to 15 per cent. Ours has Seyval, Vidal, L'Acadie, Muscat and Ortega.

"There are seven wineries at this point, but hopefully next year or some time in the future, we'll have all the wineries participating. The interesting part to me is that all the Tidal Bay wines need to be approved by an independent tasting panel, a mix of educators, writers and whatnot."

The committee is headed by winemaker Simon Rafuse of Blomidon Estate, and members include wine writers Sean Wood and Craig Pinhey, Peter Rockwell of the Nova Scotia Liquor Corp., and sommeliers Mark DeWolf and Carman Mills.

All fruit in Tidal Bay wines has to be grown in Nova Scotia, and there are also regulations concerning winery and vineyard practices.

"Tidal Bay is based on the European model, which is very different from (Vintners Quality Alliance), for instance, in Ontario," said Jean-Benoit Deslauriers, winemaker at Benjamin Bridge. "VQA is an all-inclusive umbrella, quality standards across the board for all styles.

Tidal Bay refers to a specific style of wine that we can make here in Nova Scotia at a really high level, focusing on the strength of our terroir.

"Vero, a wine that we were already making, happens to respect all of those criteria, so we made Vero our Tidal Bay. From a varietal standpoint and stylistically, it fits. It's a blend of L'Acadie and Muscat, and this year there's a little bit of Ortega."

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