

DEEP SOUTH VINEYARDS AND WINERIES

By Doc Lawrence

At the time Prohibition became national policy, much of the South had a prospering wine industry. In one area of Georgia west of Atlanta, over 40,000 acres were producing wines from grapes grown by Hungarian, German and Italian immigrants. The Volstead Act killed everything and like most of America, the region, after Prohibition's repeal started over but recovered more slowly than other parts of the country.

Today, the pathways connecting wineries extend from the Blue Ridge Mountains just north of Atlanta, upward into North Carolina's Yadkin Valley into the vast web of trails connecting Virginia's thriving vineyards components. It's a corridor from Atlanta, extending east of Charlotte, North Carolina into Charlottesville, Virginia and ending in Washington, DC

Georgia's Three Sisters, Tiger Mountain, Wolf Mountain and Crane Creek are highly regarded operations and popular destinations for enthusiasts and curious travelers. While vinifera is a mainstay, a genuinely American wine grape cannot be ignored. Cynthiana, also known as Norton, could almost be described as Thomas Jefferson's wine. He knew all about its Cherokee popularity and died just before the wild fruit was domesticated. In the early 20th Century, Cynthiana/Norton was blowing vinifera away in international competition. Today, Three Sisters and Tiger Mountain have bottles that are acclaimed and amazingly food friendly. Think French Syrah when you drink it.

North Carolina's agricultural forces substituted vineyards for tobacco farming and the switch has paid off handsomely. The Tar Heel state is literally awash in wine production with the Yanking Valley, once home to actor Andy Griffith leading the way. Notable tastings are waiting to be enjoyed at acclaimed Shelton Vineyards, RagApple Lassie, Raffaldini and Hanover Park, among others. Vinifera rules..

Virginia is true to the vision of native son Thomas Jefferson who envisioned America as a top wine producing country. The state boasts top wineries literally everywhere from the city limits of Washington, DC on over to the Kentucky border. Leading wineries include DelFosse in Faber, Hartwood just outside D.C. in Fredericksburg. Jefferson in Charlottesville and exalted Horton Cellars Winery in Gordonsville.

Virginia's state wine grape is Norton.