

Balistreri

by Kathy Sullivan

WINE TRAIL TRAVELER
WINERY AND VINEYARD VIRTUAL VISITOR CENTER

Summary: Balistreri is a unique winery with an appreciation for using less manipulation in producing its wines. All wines are made with natural yeasts. No sulfites are added to the wines and there is no fining, filtering or racking the wines. Check out the events at Balistreri especially the annual Harvest Party.



The Balistreri winery opened in 1998. John Balistreri is the owner and winemaker at Balistreri Vineyards. John's daughter Julie also makes the wine and takes care of the business end of the operations. The tasting room is located in a cabin-style building. Outside the tasting room, is a trellis with grapevines and tables with chairs underneath. Nearby a large maple tree provides shade over another seating area.

John is friendly and enjoys talking about his wines. He is passionate about his style of winemaking. John had an uncle that made a dry Muscat wine. John made wine as a youth. Today John produces all of the wines with natural yeasts. He does not add sulfites during winemaking. There is no filtering, no racking and no fining of the wines. The resulting wines may have a slight haze or slight sediment – but this in no way is detrimental to the wine. In fact, many wine drinkers may prefer wines that are not fined, filtered or racked. It is a more natural process. John also does not use cold stabilization for white wines.

The winery bottles in traditional wine bottles but rather than using foil, John prefers a sealing wax because it is tamper proof. No matter the reason for the wax, it adds a note of elegance to the wine bottle. Today Balistreri produces over 50,000 bottles, about 4200 cases. A short distance from the winery building, there are two and a half acres of vineyards. John sources mostly Colorado grapes but sometimes he obtains grapes from California. Colorado and California grapes are never mixed. John pointed out that the wines with Colorado on them are made from 100 percent Colorado grapes.

The Balistreri family is very involved with the winery. John's son, an artist, and professor at Bowling Green University in Ohio, created several sculptures on the winery property.



Areas are available for special events. While we were visiting, tents were put up for the 6th Annual Harvest Party. Julie was busy preparing for this event which may draw 1000 people. This year's festival will include grape stomping for children, a feast of appetizers, pizza, roast pig and desserts along with music. The winery will roast seven 200-pound pigs beginning the day before. If you can't make it in time for this year's Harvest Party, check out the event for next year. The grapes stomped by children are used to make the wine labeled "Little Feet." The Little Feet wines are especially popular with the parents of the children who have participated in the stomping. Parents also purchase a bottle of the wine to give to their children when they are twenty-one.



We began our tasting with white and ended with dessert wines. The wines have an identical image on their labels. The image is a watercolor painting by Francis Balistreri.

White Wines

Barrel fermented Chardonnay 2006 was aged in American oak for 12 months. The nose had green apple and pear nuances and the taste was creamy. The finish was very creamy and buttery with pear.

Colorado Chardonnay 2005 had a golden color. This Chardonnay offered a vanilla nose and a creamy, fruit and spice taste. The finish was long with fruit, butter and vanilla.

Dry Muscat had a floral aroma - particularly rose. The finish was crisp. This is the family traditional wine.

Viognier 2007 had a tropical nose with a creamy and tropical fruit taste. The crisp finish offers tropical fruit with a hint of tannins. This wine is a multi-layered wine with some surprises. Tannins with a white wine was one surprise and the different layers of fruit was the other.

Red Wines



Colorado Sangiovese 2006 had a red cherry nose. The taste was very fruit forward. The finish was crisp with tannins and a long fruit aftertaste.

Colorado Little Feet Merlot, named Little Feet because children stomped the grapes, had a dark purple color. The aroma was of dark red fruit and the taste was creamy and fruity. The finish was balanced, not hot despite the alcohol level being 15 percent. Tannins were very noticeable on the finish.

Grapes for the Colorado Little Feet Merlot 2007 were from Lovies vineyard. The nose was a dark red and the taste was very fruity. The finish was fruity with big, very puckery, tannins. The alcohol is 16 and a half percent alcohol but you wouldn't realize it.

Colorado Syrah 2006 was a very complex wine. There was pepper on the nose. The taste was creamy with black berry fruit. The finish goes from heavy fruit yielding to pepper and spice. The alcohol was 16 and a half percent, but unless you read it on the bottle you wouldn't notice the alcohol.

Colorado Zinfandel 2007 offered a plum nose with a very fruity dried fruit to jam taste. The finish was also fruity with a hint of hot spices.

Cabernet Cherry was aged in oak barrels. The cherry nose and taste was of Montmorency cherries. The finish was crisp with cherry. The residual sugar was 4 percent and the alcohol was 16 percent.



Currently 5 restaurants and 80 to 90 liquor stores around the state carry Balistreri wines. However, the winery sells 88 percent of their wine from the tasting room.

Balistreri is a friendly winery. They enjoy talking about their wines and what makes their wines unique. We believe you will enjoy a visit to Balistreri.

J. A. Balistreri Vineyards

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GPS N 39°81.635' W104° 96.485'