

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

The last market day of August is now history and we look forward to the very busy days of September, when everyone is back to school and work.

The farmers' tables will be piled high with beautiful produce and there will be lots of choice. In addition, we now have a local lamb farmer joining us and I will tell you more about them in a future column.

At the Market last Saturday, the second of our wineries, Stanners Vineyard, was back for another visit. They are a family owned, artisan winery set in Hillier, Prince Edward County. The co-owners are Cliff and Dorothy Stanners, and son and daughter-in-law, Colin Stanners and Mary Macdonald.

The first inkling that they might begin a winery was triggered by a bicycling trip that Cliff and Dorothy took around the county in 2002. There had been murmurings of a wine region with a few wineries and a number of vineyards soon to become wineries setting up locally. This seemed like an extremely appealing idea to all the family.

Dorothy and Cliff were living in Quebec where Cliff worked as a microbiologist in cancer research and Dorothy worked in the Beaconsfield library. Mary and Colin were then living in the San Francisco Bay area where Colin's scientific background in physical chemistry eventually led to work in the computer industry. Mary worked as a potter/artist and, of course, mother.

Both families were making wines as amateurs at home and, in the early 2000s, their lives were at transition points so they decided to jump into a new adventure. They bought the spot at 76 Station Road in 2003 and planted the first acre in 2005. Then, beginning in 2004, Cliff and Dorothy gradually made the move from Baie D'Urfee to PEC as things wound down at Cliff's lab. The Stanners-Macdonald family made the move in 2006.

They have nearly 8 acres planted with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. They produce wines from these 3 varieties as well as Cabernet Franc and Riesling from grapes which they purchase.

Colin is their winemaker. Keenly dedicated to allowing the grapes to express their ?terroir?, with patience and focus, Colin is producing polished, complex, award-winning wines, allowing the vintage to speak clearly and with purity. The combination of cool Lake Ontario breezes and limestone rich soil make for ideal conditions. They produce 1,000 cases per year (about 12,000 bottles) so their small production allows them to create their wines gently and with minimum handling at each stage of winemaking.

Their property totals 25 acres and borders the protected Hillier wetland which is home to a diverse bird population from herons to bitterns, warblers, swallows, snipe and kingfishers, in addition to frogs, snakes and turtles.

In their four years of retail operations their wines have consistently garnered medals with InterVin Wine Awards and the Canadian Wine Awards/ Wine Align National Wine Awards Canada.

Their Pinot Noir was recognized as Best Over-all at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Their wines are listed in fine restaurants in the Greater Toronto and Ottawa areas as well as locally and regionally. Dorothy and Cliff are the restaurant sales team and Mary is usually in the tasting room.

The winery participates in TASTE Community Grown, a delightful celebration of food and wine with seminars and cooking competitions. This year's TASTE is on September 27.

They welcome everyone to join their harvest parties, which are usually held around Thanksgiving. They also participate in Wassail during the last two weekends of November and the first weekend of December. This is the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association celebration of the laying down and burying of the grape canes for their winter slumber and a big sigh of relief for the wine growers!

The next Special Event at the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair is our annual Apples and Honey Festival on September 6. We are hoping that the weather co-operates so that Andre can bring his bees to the Market. Our own Manatee Band will be playing and there will be a face painter, a scavenger hunt, crafts for kids and a draw for a Market bag full of goodies at 12 noon.

See you at the Market!