

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

The Aurora Farmers' Market was blessed with another lovely cool but sunny day last weekend which brought out the crowds shopping for their Thanksgiving dinners.

They had much to choose from as the farmers' tables were heaped with the abundance of produce that fall brings. Fall strawberries and raspberries were still available as were plums, pears and many varieties of apples. Catharina had apple and pumpkin pies as well as an amazing gingerbread pear upside down cake, one of which is sitting on my kitchen counter. There is so much choice at the Market in the fall and it is always a very busy time for us.

You may have noticed that there is now another Ontario winery at the Market, located in the park. Tawse is a family owned estate winery located on the lower slopes of the Niagara Escarpment in Vineland. They unite traditional winemaking techniques with state-of-the-art technology to create wines of exceptional elegance, depth and character. Their fruit is harvested from old-growth, low-yield vines and gently handled using natural gravity flow and geothermic energy. They apply rigorous organic and biodynamic methods to every aspect of their wine production.

Tawse was named Canadian Winery of the Year by Canadian Wine Magazine in 2010, 2011, and 2012. This is the first time that an Ontario winery has won this distinction three years in a row, with a record setting nine gold medals. Their winemaker, Paul Pender, was named Winemaker of the Year in 2011 at the Ontario Wine Awards.

Tawse's first harvest was in 2001, with the winery opening in 2005. Tawse owns more than 200 acres of vineyards in the Vineland/Beamsville area. Varietals are Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Syrah and Gamay. The Limestone Ridge vineyard, purchased in 2012, is the largest one to date at 61 acres, located above the village of Jordan.

All Tawse estate wines are produced using certified organic and biodynamic farming techniques. Biodynamic farming is an approach that sees the vineyard as its own self-sustaining ecological entity. It is based on traditional agricultural practices such as planting and harvesting at certain points in the lunar calendar. The biodynamic movement originated as a set of principles in Germany in the 1920's. It took Tawse four years to achieve its official certification in April 2011 to the international standards of biodynamic farming.

Biodynamic farming is actually a very natural and holistic means of growing grapes for wine production. Beneath the rows of grape vines, the soil is a living organism in its own right joined by flora and fauna that are co-dependent. The biodynamic farmer works within this ecosystem and does not alter the natural processes that exist. Biodynamic vineyards are intended to be self-sustaining entities. Ideally, they should be able to produce what they need, and expunge what they don't require in a self-contained manner without the use of anything sourced externally.

Biodynamic farming involves all major components such as biodiversity, soil fertility, crop rotation, as well as pest, weed and disease control. It is based on the concept of the vineyard being its own self-contained ecosystem requiring no pesticides, fungicides or chemical fertilizers. Natural predators will keep pests at bay, livestock will eat weeds and excess vine foliage and produce manure for soil enrichment.

Cover crops may be planted between the vine rows to create biodiversity and provide shelter and food for beneficial fauna such as insects, spiders and predatory mites. They also reduce erosion and help support soil structure by sending roots deep into the topsoil, helping rain water penetrate.

The wines produced using these methods have stronger, purer and more vibrant aromas and flavours. These methods also lead to better balance in fruit growth, where the sugar production in the grape corresponds with its physiological ripeness. This means that the wine will be better balanced in flavour and alcohol content within the context of our ever changing climate.

Given all the thought and planning that have gone into creating this winery and its award winning wines, I encourage you to visit their booth in the park to sample their extraordinary wines.

The Farmers' Market is open outdoors until October 25th. Saturday, October 18 is a regular Market day but the final Saturday, October 25th will see a presentation by Marquee Theatrical Productions at the bandshell. There will also be our annual pumpkin carving contest when the public can vote for their favourite pumpkin.

See you at the Market!