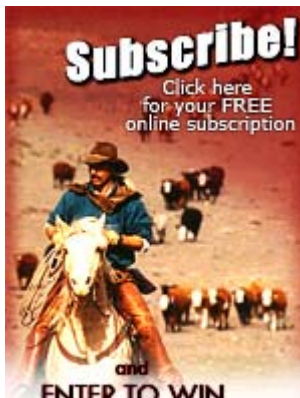




- Contents ▶
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- Contests ▶
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- Bermuda (1)
- Bolivia (3)
- Bosnia-Herzegovina (1)



Verna Gates

Brad McCarthy pours samplings of his Blenheim Wines. White wines appear to be one of the specialties of Virginia wineries.

Virginia Viney *The Dream of America President Takes Fruit Soil*

By Verna Gat

Walking the grounds of Keswick Hall, I see a blue mist slowly rising over the hills of Virginia. Keswick Hall sits like a golden jewel in the midst of them, reflecting the look of an English country manor, just as the Colonists would desired. Except, this is distinctly American, with a brush of Italian, a dab of and a bit of overstuffed Southern comfort awaiting inside.

Archway after archway opens into a welcoming home-like environment in which you might expect to find your rich uncle, ready to entertain you with the luxuries gathered from around the world.

I feel so transformed myself that I fully expect to see Thomas Jefferson (17th) and James Monroe - the third and fifth U.S. presidents - crest the hill on their steeds. It is the perfect beginning for an elegant day of wine tasting in the Virginia wine country: Charlottesville

It was Jefferson himself, that devout gardener, who first attempted to grow grapes for wines in the New World. Having cultivated a taste for fine wines in France, his own Virginia soil and temperate climate would prove perfect for viticulture.

Jefferson's experiment failed, but modern day wineries daily prove his theory. Virginia sells more than 250,000 cases of wine annually, according to the Virginia Wine & Food Society, making it the fifth largest wine producer in the U.S. I

- Botswana (2) fifth in the number of wineries, with more than 80.
- Brazil (2)
- British Virgin Islands (1) Few of the wineries produce in mass, leaving plenty of room for family and wineries to stamp each bottle and each tasting with its own personality. Ke set up a tour that included meeting some of these winemakers.
- Bulgaria (1)
- Cambodia (4)
- Canada (24)
- Chile (3)
- China (9)
- Costa Rica (4) Sitting in the Palladio Restaurant at Barboursville Winery, I can hardly believe eyes. A lean, handsome Italian man is leaning over me and personally shaw onto my sumptuous meal. He moves down the table, sharing the rarity of r European black truffles with his guests.
- Croatia (1)
- Cuba (1) This delightful man is Luca Paschina, winemaker and son of winemakers. H entertains in that easy, graceful way unique to Italians who value life's most important blessings: food and love.
- Denmark (1)
- Ecuador (2)
- Egypt (2)
- England (19) With each delicious course, we taste a different wine. Each layer builds upon other, the wine and food are perfect complements, and all is enhanced by j company. The combination makes everything taste especially wonderful.
- Estonia (1)
- Finland (2)
- France (9) Fully gorged on Northern Italian-style food, we stuff ourselves into a van and head for the vineyards. Jefferson's own attempts at wine making bordered this very vineyard. A ruin of a house, located on the property, was once occupied by James Barbour, an early Virginia governor.
- Germany (5)
- Greece (4)
- Guatemala (2)
- Honduras (1)
- Hungary (2)
- Iceland (5)
- India (6)
- Iraq (1)
- Ireland (5) Destroyed in a fire in the 1880s, the home was designed by Barbour's friend, Jefferson. The octagon room is echoed in the name of a Barboursville wine, my favorite of the Keswick reds, which is called, of course, Octagon.
- Israel (3)
- Italy (17) Today, Shakespeare plays are performed on this site.
- Jamaica (2)
- Japan (5)
- Jordan (1)
- Kenya (2)
- Korea (2)
- Macau (1)
- Malaysia (4) From there, our Keswick Hall designated driver takes us to Edgewood Estate, one of the few grand Colonial homes still standing. It was built by Dr. Thomas Walker, who, with a good farm breakfast, delayed British troops long enough for Jefferson and the Legislature to escape.
- Mauritania (1)
- Mexico (19)
- Micronesia (1)
- Moldova (1)
- Mongolia (1)
- Morocco (2)
- Mozambique (1)
- Netherlands (4) This event saved the author of the Declaration of Independence (Jefferson) and leaders of the Revolutionary war. More recently, the estate was owned by singer/songwriter Art Garfunkel.
- New Zealand (7)
- Nicaragua (1)
- Norway (2)
- Panama (1)
- Peru (4)



Thomas Jefferson, American president, stands proudly in university he founded. This is the central campus complex architectural genius.

- Philippines (1) Later that evening, we indulge in yet more wines at Keswick Hall during a t
- Poland (1) tasting, which we all fail miserably. Only the winemakers succeed in identif
- Portugal (2) local and imported wines, and even they make a few mistakes.
- Romania (1)
- Russia (6) With fresh palates, we head out the next morning to the Kluge Estate Wine
- Scotland (3) Kluge, who recently emerged from a well-publicized divorce from billionaire
- Seychelles (1) man John Kluge, is rich, remarried and making wine.
- Singapore (2) Her Kluge Estate is the most formal and organized of the wineries in Charlc
- Slovenia (1) testimonial to the grace and force of her personality. Her Farm Shop emits
- South Africa (2) aromas from cheeses, jams and other goodies available for tasting and pur
- Spain (4)
- Sri Lanka (1) A formal tasting table offers samples of her New World Red, a full-bodied w
- Sweden (3) runs US\$ 58 a bottle. The couple on the tasting stool next to me leaves wit
- Switzerland (2) prefer the sparkling white wine, at a more reasonable US\$ 38 per bottle. It
- Tanzania (2) with the chocolate cloud of a dessert I sample from the Farm Shop.
- Thailand (9)
- Tunisia (2) From the most formal to the most rustic, we head to Blenheim Vineyards, \
- United Arab Emirates (1) we're met at a wine barn by winemaker Brad McCarthy, whose partner in t
- United States (123) is musician Dave Matthews.
- Uruguay (1) The temperature in the barn is set for the wine's comfort, not ours. We sta
- Vietnam (3) freezing, in front of a pine board bar, sipping while Brad talks wine talk. I c
- Wales (1) if it is the temperature or the taste, but this is my least favorite stop.
- Yemen (1)
- Zambia (1) Later, I find myself seated in comfort at Fleurie, a wonderful Charlottesville
- Zimbabwe (1) restaurant. The food, French-style, is good, especially my rack of lamb, an

the added benefit of sitting at a table next to thriller writer John Grisham, \ is as handsome as his book jackets indicate.

He lives here now, in Charlottesville, and greets people as he leaves. He st at our table, as he recognizes our local companion, and asks the mandator are you?" Assured she is fine, he graciously tolerates short name-only intrc nods sweetly, and then takes his leave with his wife. After all, this is Virgin good manners matter.

The next day, we soberly explore the homes of Jefferson and Monroe. A tou University of Virginia, a must to see the architectural brilliance of Thomas J completes our exploration of this historic area.

These days, Charlottesville works to write a new chapter in its history, in p harmony with its most famous citizen, Jefferson, the ultimate example of c agriculture.

IF YOU GO

Keswick Hall at Monticello

Rooms start at US\$ 295, but if you want the one movie actor Paul Newmar wife JoAnne Woodward stayed in, it will cost US\$ 895. The hotel will also o wine tour for you. Packages start at US\$ 910 for two, which includes two n meals, afternoon tea and wine packages.

www.keswick.com

434-923-4320

The Wineries

Barboursville Vineyards
www.barboursvillewine.com
540-832-3824.

Keswick Vineyards
www.keswickvineyards.com
434-244-3341

Kluge Estate
www.klugeestate.com
434-977-3895

Blenheim Winery:
http://www.blenheimvineyards.com/who_winery.htm
434-293-5366

Monticello Wine Trail
www.monticellowinetrail.org
877-386-1102.

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