

SPARK > Rob's Cocktail Corner

BV Wine Trail: Kreutz Creek

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JIM AND CAROLE KIRKPATRICK

Owners of the Kreutz Creek Winery in West Grove, Pa., Jim and Carole are the go-to couple when it comes to grape growing on the Brandywine Valley Wine Trail (this according to many of the winemakers we've already talked to). Now they're starting a new trend by offering their wines at local tasting rooms in West Chester and Media.

Ever since we started this tour of the Brandywine Valley Wine Trail, it seems as though every winemaker not only has a passion for winemaking and a great respect for their southeastern Pennsylvania neighbors, but they also give one particular man a lot of credit.

That man is Jim Kirkpatrick, the head winemaker at Kreutz Creek Vineyards in West Grove, Pa., and go-to guy when it comes to seeking advice for grape growing in Chester County. His name comes up *a lot* at other wineries.

So we paid him a visit at his 20-acre farm last week to talk about the 13 grapes they've been growing since 1998. And, along with his wife, Carole, it seems they've come up with another tactic that might pique the interest of his fellow winemakers.

The Kirkpatricks are bringing their wares closer to the masses around these parts opening up area tasting rooms. We stopped in for a visit to the winery to see how their satellite rooms were doing, and for a taste, of course.

KREUTZ CREEK BRINGS THE WINE A LITTLE BIT CLOSER

While it's been great sipping some good local wine, there's been one snag with most of the wineries we've visited so far -- in order to get a hold of most of their wines, one must make a half-hour trip (sometimes more) because very few of the wines are sold closer to Delaware.

That changed this week when we stopped by Kreutz Creek in West Grove, only to find out they now have tasting rooms in Media and West Chester. Apparently diners in both towns appreciate the Kirkpatricks bringing their wine to them, because both places have hit the ground running.

"People are busy these days, so they don't always have the time to come way up here, even if it's for wine they really like," Carole Kirkpatrick told us. "We wanted to make our wine more available to the foot traffic in towns like Media and West Chester, and so far it's going really well."



Jim and Carole Kirkpatrick.

PHOTOS BY JESSICA BRATTON | spark



Kreutz Creek wines.

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The Kirkpatricks call their tasting rooms BYOFs, as in Bring Your Own Food, where visitors can taste any four wines for free, taste all 10 for \$5, or get a glass of one particular for \$6 or \$7. They bring their own cheese or crackers and it makes a perfect starting point before making their way to a restaurant in town.

Both locations offer live music every Friday and Saturday from 6-9 p.m., including everything from acoustic and country to rock and jazz. "It makes a great early stop-off before they go to dinner," Jim said. "And that's what people seem to be doing a lot of these days, kind of sampling some wine and food at different restaurants in a given evening."

WINE AND WHAT TO EAT

As with most of the Brandywine Valley Wine Trail wineries we've visited, we again asked our resident winemakers to tell us a little bit about their varietals and make some food pairing recommendations. Kreutz Creek wines are available for the price listed at the winery in West Grove.

Vidal Blanc, 2005, \$12.99. A real thirst-quencher, this white is best downed with a plate of crab cakes after a hard day's work in the vineyard. Really though, any seafood will do.

Chardonnay, 2005, \$18.99. An interesting chard that might be best suited for those who don't normally drink the varietal, this non-buttery white gives off flavors of pineapple, coconut and vanilla and goes well with cheese or shrimp.

Proprietor's Red, 2004, \$15.99. Look for Kirkpatrick's dogs, Opus and Fetzer, on the label, and expect notes of blueberry and black cherry. Jim's recommendation for the steel-fermented red is pasta with red sauce or some hearty, grilled Kennett Square mushrooms.

Cab Franc, 2005, \$17.99. Oak aged with a somewhat smokey aftertaste, this red pairs well with a cedar plank-grilled salmon filet.

Steuben Rosé, 2005, \$12.99. A brilliant rose with all kinds of flavors going on, including strawberry and a touch of grapefruit. Carole even throws it in a blender with ice cream and fresh strawberries for her own wine smoothie.

Ruby K Port, 2004, \$14.99 for a 375 ml bottle. Up front sweetness and a robust finish make this dessert wine excellent for any dark chocolate treat, like a flourless chocolate cake or brownies.

