

VIRGINIA IS RAPIDLY BECOMING A WINE HEAVEN



wines.

Whereas many American cities and states pride themselves on huge multi-million dollar tourist complexes, casinos and giant urban jungles, Virginia seems happy to make the most of its natural assets to pull in the tourists. It is becoming more and more famous for its farmland and, in particular, wines. The state now boasts around 120 vineyards, is the 5th in America in the number of wineries and is famous for a plethora of restaurants specializing in dishes complimented with the flavors of local

The most famous local wine is called Octagon, a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet France. This particular product has its own barrel aging room and celebrated its 30th anniversary last year. According to the official government tax figures, Virginia is America's fastest growing wine producer. The Octagon wine has been described as one of the most popular wines in North America.

The wine industry is not only good news for the reputation of Virginia, yet is even better news for the local economy. Whereas regular tourists tend to spend around \$139 per trip, the wine-taster tends to splash out something like \$299, more than twice as much. In reaction to this business potential, Virginia has been hosting a number of events connected to the glorified beverage, particularly in autumn. October is the month of wine in Virginia during which visitors flock to the wineries to gargle on and sip the local products.

The Travel and Leisure magazine recently noted that Virginia's potential in the wine market is nothing short of enormous. The environment is almost perfect, the products have so far been excellent and the local attitude in taking it so seriously is a good sign for the future. Perhaps just one step is necessary to complete: to make more people aware of what Virginia can offer to the world's wine connoisseurs.

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