

Outer Banks winery takes Best in Show at N.C. Fine Wines Society Gala

• [By Michael Hastings Winston-Salem Journal](#)

• Feb 20, 2018



[Buy Now](#)

These are the 12 winning wines of the N.C. Fine Wines Society Showcase.
Courtesy of the N.C. Fine Wines Society

Sanctuary Vineyards won Best in Show last weekend for its 2015 Double Barrel red blend at the second annual awards gala of the N.C. Fine Wines Society.

A sold-out crowd of 250 wine-industry workers and members of the public attended the gala Saturday night at the Millennium Center downtown.

The gala included a five-course meal paired with North Carolina wines.

The nonprofit society was organized about two years ago by state winery owners who want to raise the profile of the best wines that North Carolina has to offer. It also offers scholarships to students studying to enter a wine-related business. In its first year, the society raised about \$20,000 for scholarships, said Dan McLaughlin, the secretary of the society and the owner of a marketing agency for breweries and wineries.

Twelve wines received awards, six in individual categories, and six in a miscellaneous category to make up a “case” of N.C. wines.

Sanctuary Vineyards is a small vineyard and winery in Jarvisburg, on the Outer Banks, just three miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Its estate-grown Double Barrel red, which also won the Red Vinifera category, is a blend of tannat and petit verdot grapes.

The other big winners Saturday were Jones von Drehle Vineyards, which is in Thurmond, and Surry Cellars, the winery attached to the oenology and viticulture program at Surry Community College in Dobson.

Jones von Drehle won in the Best Rose category for its 2016 Rosa Dia, a dry rose made from Grenache, and for its 2014 Petit Verdot Estate and 2012 Petit Verdot Reserve.

Surry Cellars won in the Sparkling category for its 2016 Blue Ridge Bubbles, and in the Dessert category for its 2013 Iced Petit Manseng.

This year, 28 wineries and vineyards submitted 117 wines. The wines were judged blind by a handful of advanced sommeliers. Jay Raffaldini, the owner of Raffaldini Vineyards and the president of the society, said that California wineries tried to submit a few wines this year, simply because they wanted to be judged by such high standards. But they were turned down, because all grapes and wines have to be both 100 percent grown and vinified in North Carolina, and only vinifera or hybrid grapes are permitted.

The judging is strict, Raffaldini said, “because we wanted to set the bar high.”

The evening also included a recorded message from well-known wine critic James Suckling and a reading of wine-inspired poetry by local poet Joseph Mills from his book “Angels, Thieves and Winemakers.” Mills and his wife, Danielle Tarmey, have previously written two editions of “A Guide to North Carolina’s Wineries.”

Chef Patrick Rafferty paired each course of his five-course dinner with a North Carolina wine. “The way we chose the wines is we invited the winners from last year to each submit a wine, and chef Patrick tasted all of the wines and created a menu,” McLaughlin said.

Full disclosure: I was invited to taste the submitted wines a few months ago with Rafferty, who has a good palate and understands how to pair wine with food. But I can’t take credit for any of the dinner or pairings — it was all Rafferty’s doing, and he did a great job.

The society also should be commended for tightening the gala schedule. The marathon dinner and awards ceremony of last year was pared down to a manageable two hours last week.

Raffaldini said that six new wineries entered the competition this year, and his hope is to see the wines continue to improve.

“Tonight is not about the 12 winning wines,” he said. “It’s about all of us who are trying to make great wine in North Carolina.”

For more information, visit www.ncfinewines.com.

The Winning Wines and Five-Course Dinner

The best wines of the N.C. Fine Wines Showcase were chosen in six categories, and the remainder of the case consists of the next highest-scoring wines:

- Best in Show and Best Red Vinifera: Sanctuary Vineyards Double Barrel 2015
- Best White Vinifera: Point Lookout Vineyards Riesling 2016
- Best Dessert: Surry Cellars Iced Petit Manseng 2013
- Best Hybrid: JOLO Winery & Vineyards Crimson Creek 2016
- Best Sparkling: Surry Cellars Blue Ridge Bubbles 2016
- Best Rosé: Jones von Drehle Vineyards Rosa Dia 2016
- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Laurel Gray Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2014
- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Jones von Drehle Vineyards Petit Verdot Estate 2014
- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Parker-Binns Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2015

- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Raffaldini Vineyards Vermentino Superiore 2016
- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Jones von Drehle Vineyards Petit Verdot Reserve 2012
- N.C. Fine Wines Case: Midnight Magdalena Merlot NV

The dinner for the 2nd Annual N.C. Fine Wines Society Gala, prepared by Chef Patrick Rafferty of the Millennium Center, was as follows:

- First Course/Amuse Bouche: Lobster vol-au-vents with fennel leek relish, corn pudding, chives; paired with 2017 Shelton Sauvignon Blanc.
- Second Course: Winter squash salad with butternut-acorn, red kuri, goat cheese mousse, white wine; paired with Cellar 4201 Chardonnay (Oaked) NV.
- Third Course: Sous-vide duck breast with red wine poached cherries, parsnip puree, salsify, baby carrot, and cherry vincotto demi-glace, paired with 2013 Grove Nebbiolo.
- Fourth Course: Eye of bison ribeye with truffled fondant potatoes, bone marrow custard, white asparagus, cavolo nero, cipollini onion with sauce Perigourdine; paired with 2014 Jones Von Drehle Petit Verdot.
- Fifth Course/Dessert: Dark chocolate torte with blood orange sorbet, pomegranate gelée, piment d'Espelette, and vanilla powder, paired with 2015 Raffaldini Montepulciano Riserva.