

# Pinhey's estate wines' first vintage

At Noble Grape in Fredericton, Craig explores just how good winemaking kits are these days. By Craig Pinhey

“We don't even call ourselves a wine on premise store...we're an urban winery,” explains Steve Haynes, of Brewing Centres in Halifax, the people behind Noble Grape, a newish business on Prospect Rd. in Fredericton.

I was talking to Steve because I knew him from homebrewing happenings in Halifax, and I needed some answers to questions for this article. Steve knows his shit, when it comes to wine and beer making. He makes commercial quality beer at home, and his wines aren't too slouchy either.

I recently (December 9, 2006) made a couple of batches of wine at Noble Grape, from the premium “selection” kits produced by “Wine-expert.” My “boss” during the winemaking and bottling/labelling operations was Trevor Scott, who knows Steve from working in Halifax.

At Noble Grape you can pay a premium on top of the kit price, and make your wine there. It's incredibly convenient. You use their equipment - including a boss bottling and labelling set-up, their storage space, and you get help and tips during the operation. This is happening at various levels at other wine and beer shops around New Brunswick, and is becoming quite popular. In Nova Scotia there's nothing of this nature - it's not allowed, but there are no specific regulations prohibiting this practice in N. Brunswick.

That said, at Noble Grape they have several self-imposed rules that follow brew-on-premise policies in Ontario. The customer must make the wine themselves - they must pitch the yeast, and they must bottle it themselves. People like

Trevor are there to help, but it's your job. You must sign a “winery agreement” before production ensues.

I really enjoyed making the wine, including the bottling operation a couple of months later, where I decorated the wines with custom Pinhey's Estate labels. The hydraulic cork inserter and shrink wrap heater were fun and easy to operate.

I was especially interested in the red I made, which is from the “Crushendo” product line. I chose the Montagnac Vieux Chateau D'Oc. This blend of Mouvedre, Carignan, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Viognier (hey, that's a white grape!) comes from the Languedoc-Rousillon region of Southern France. The cool thing about Crushendo kits - which is why they are the most expensive in the selection line - is they come with a bag of real crushed grapes that you add to the wine at start of fermentation. This adds intense colour and grape tannins to the wine - they're extracted during the vigorous fermentation, aided by “punching the cap,” when the skins that float to the top are pushed down, mixing them back into the wine. This is normally the difference between good commercial red wine and homemade wine - the lack of significant tannins. Premium wine kits are commonly made from juice that has undergone a “hot pressing” with skins to extract tannins, but Crushendo takes it a step further.

I tasted the red during bottling, and noted the tannins right away, but I found it had that “Beaujolais Nouveau fruitiness” I often encounter in homemade reds. I asked Steve about this. “I truly believe that, as the wine ages and the



flavours integrate, the “fruitiness” will subside and the complexity will become much more to your liking,” answered Steve, “think August.” Gee, I gotta be patient!

The other kit I made was a less expensive white from the Symphony grape, derived from the Muscat grape family. Price-wise, the Symphony worked out to around \$6 a bottle (you get around 30 bottles per kit), significantly less than the \$8 per bottle for my red.

The Symphony smelled and tasted great right from the get-go. I could have drunk it from the carboy. After the initial whiff of matchstick due to sulfur (typical of many young whites - this was just bottled a week ago, it's a baby!) blows off, the wine is all flowers, perfume and tropical fruit on the nose, with balanced acidity and a delicious flavour, with light-medium body. I'd expect to pay at least \$9 or 10 for this wine at the ANBL, possibly more.

One of my questions to Steve (no surprise to my regular readers) was “Why don't you do this with those Festabrew all-wort brewing kits, so I can make my own microbrew quality beer and keg it?” “It may be legal but it isn't economically attractive at all,” explains Steve. “There is a definite ceiling on what people will pay for beer.” Too bad. The Festabrew IPA rocks.

So there you have it. You can be your own winery, on someone else's turf, with no capital outlay or mess to clean up. Pinhey's Estate is sounding pretty good to me right now (he said as he sipped his Symphony).

You can e-mail Trevor at Noble Grape at [trevor@noblegrape.ca](mailto:trevor@noblegrape.ca), or better yet, visit him at his Urban Winery at 1111-4 Regent St. Brewing Centres is online at [www.betterbrew.com](http://www.betterbrew.com).<sup>17</sup>

*Craig Pinhey thinks that he should start his own brew/wine pub. Anyone want to give me a grant for a couple million? Visit [www.frogspad.ca](http://www.frogspad.ca).*

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