



## Where To Sip

### WHITE COUNTY HABERSHAM VINEYARDS & WINERY

7025 S. Main St., Helen  
706-878-9463  
[www.habershamwinery.com](http://www.habershamwinery.com)

**SAUTEE NACOOCHEE VINEYARDS**  
98 Old Nacoochee Way,  
Sautee-Nacoochee, 706-878-1056  
[www.sauteenacoocheevineyards.com](http://www.sauteenacoocheevineyards.com)

**YONAH MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS**  
1717 Hwy 255, Cleveland  
706-878-5522  
[www.yonahmountainvineyards.com](http://www.yonahmountainvineyards.com)

**LUMPKIN COUNTY  
BLACKSTOCK VINEYARDS  
& WINERY**  
5400 Town Creek Rd., Dahlonega  
706-219-2789  
[www.bsvw.com](http://www.bsvw.com)

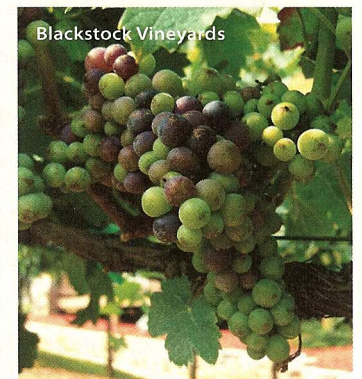
**FROGTOWN CELLARS**  
700 Ridge Point Dr., Dahlonega  
706-865-0687  
[www.frogtownwine.com](http://www.frogtownwine.com)

**M VINEYARDS AT MONTALUCE**  
501 Hightower Church Rd.,  
Dahlonega, 706-867-4060  
[www.montaluce.com](http://www.montaluce.com)

**THREE SISTERS VINEYARDS  
& WINERY**  
439 Vineyard Way, Dahlonega  
706-865-9463  
[www.threesistersvineyards.com](http://www.threesistersvineyards.com)

**WOLF MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS  
& WINERY**  
180 Wolf Mountain Trail  
Dahlonega, 706-867-9862  
[www.wolfmountainvineyards.com](http://www.wolfmountainvineyards.com)

**PICKENS COUNTY  
SHARP MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS**  
110 Rathgeb Trail, Jasper  
770-735-1210  
[www.sharpmountainvineyards.com](http://www.sharpmountainvineyards.com)



# Pass the Wine, Please

A toast to Georgia's burgeoning wine industry. **BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK**

You're thirsty for a glass of wine. The server suggests a chardonnay or cabernet sauvignon from a lovely little vineyard up in North Georgia. If the thought of local wine makes you mutter, "I'll pass, thanks," then you must not have tasted Georgia wine lately. Otherwise you'd more likely say, "Please bring me the bottle." Seriously.

Terroir is a tricky thing to define—heck, we don't even have an English translation for the French term. Words can seem inadequate to describe the ethereal qualities of wine and the characteristics that specific local conditions like soil, weather, topography and geography contribute to it.

"Our wines won't and shouldn't taste like French or Californian wine and that's what's so interesting about tasting," says David Harris, winemaker and owner of Blackstock Vineyards & Winery. "We have a different regional flavor. Variety is the spice of life, and we ought to celebrate Georgia's regional character."

If 'regional character' sounds like a euphemism for 'sub-par,' think again: "Once people have tasted our wines, they recognize that you can drink locally and not give up or compromise quality," says Harris.

Georgia wines are increasingly available in some of Atlanta's best restaurants. There are currently over 30 bonded wineries in our state. Expect those numbers to climb as new vineyards are being planted.

"Our goal is to be the ultimate producer of fine wines," says Joe Smith, winemaker at Yonah Mountain Vineyards. "We want to make the best possible wines we can." Though he admits that "everybody has different taste," his goal is to achieve the best possible expression of each varietal. Among the bag of tricks he employs is hand-sorting all grape clusters because "it's critical to make sure the fruit is the best it can be," he says. A self-described "aggressive" winemaker, he currently produces 1,800 cases of full-bodied wines a year and aims to reach annual production of 5,000 cases.

Founded in 1983, Habersham Vineyards & Winery is one of the largest and oldest wineries in Georgia. It produces more than 20 different wines under three different labels in a range of styles from dry to sweet. "We don't try to make one distinctive style," says Gibson. The goal instead is to produce "good quality wine for everyone's palate." As an example, Habersham produces three different Chardonnays, one aged in stainless steel and two that are aged in oak barrels—for varied lengths of time stored as well as types of barrel used—for more buttery characteristics.

"We are what 90 percent of the wine industry is in America," says Hue Rainey, speaking of his Sautee Nacoochee Vineyards. "That is a small, family farm winery." His wines range from dry to sweet—"a commercial necessity," he says, since different consumers seek wines along the tasting spectrum—and are "straightforward" expressions of style. Rainey leapt into the wine business after growing disillusioned with retirement. "I thought I was done, but I'm just getting started," he says of his new career. And then, realizing the same might be said of the Georgia wine industry, he adds: "It's going to get bigger and bigger."