

Drinks

Crossing Vineyards celebrates 5th birthday

This fall Crossing Vineyards and Winery will celebrate its fifth birthday with a toast to its two new locations: one in the Marketplace at East Falls in Philadelphia and the other in The Mohegan Sun Casino at Pocono Downs.

Crossing Vineyards opened its Philadelphia store in June. The launch of Crossing Vineyards Wine and Cheese Shop quickly followed, one of only six retail outlets selected for "Project Sunrise," a \$208 million, 300,000 square-foot gaming and entertainment complex at Pocono Downs.

The wine and cheese shop will offer Crossing's award-winning wines and *igourmet.com*'s line of specialty food products. Headquartered in West Pittston, Pa., *igourmet.com* is the nation's leading online gourmet food and gift retailer.

In five short years Crossing Vineyards has managed to attract national attention, but the business is hardly an overnight success. Credit for the "revolutionary" project goes to Tom Carroll Jr., who at age 10, envisioned a vineyard on his family's 20-acre farm in Upper Makefield.

After completing his studies at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Tom Jr. re-located to California to pursue

Through the grapevine

Christine Carroll

an acting career. In 2000, he returned to Bucks County to "establish his roots," as he put it, and to the plant the vineyard he had always dreamed of. In October 2003 Crossing Vineyards and Winery opened its doors to the public, and the 10-year-old's dream became a reality.

Crossing Vineyards' list of accomplishments in its fifth season is impressive, even for a business that's been 22 years in the making.

In November 2007, shortly after its 4th birthday, Crossing Vineyards was included in a list of the region's top wineries by *Philadelphia Inquirer* food and wine critic Craig La Ban. Crossing's Late Harvest Vidal Blanc '06, Chardonnay '06 and Viognier '05 were described as "...show(ing) real craft and complexity...and a growing understanding of the local terroir."

La Ban featured Crossing again in July in his Market Basket column, in which he calls Crossing "one of Pennsylvania's best wineries" and cites its '06 Cabernet Franc as "impressive."

Often featured in the local press, Crossing Vineyards made national news twice in 2008.

Tom Stevenson's 2008 Annual Wine Report, a well-respected international guide to the wines of the world, ranked Crossing Vineyards and Winery as number 5 in its top ten list of up and coming East Coast producers.

Crossing was also featured in US Airways Magazine's September issue as a "must see" attraction in Bucks County, along with Lahaska's Peddler's Village, Washington Crossing State Park and Doylestown's Michener Museum.

The local and regional press continues to spotlight Crossing Vineyards, including the *Bucks County Courier Times* and the *Philadelphia Business Journal*, which launched its "Green Works" series in June with an article on Crossing's new solar energy system.

In 2008 Crossing added 18 more medals to its trophy case, including a Critics' Gold for '06 Cabernet Franc at the Critics Challenge in San Diego, Calif. This win brings Crossing's attention-getting award total to 68.

Crossing also expanded its popular "Summer Under The Stars" concert series and in 2008 added a new sponsor, Haldeman Auto Dealerships. Dedicated to preserving open space in an area where farmland is diminishing, the Carroll family offers these events as a way of sharing the vineyard with the community. This season's artists appealed to a wide range of musical tastes, from classical to blue grass to jazz and included a first-time appearance by The Opera Company of New Jersey.

Crossing Vineyards introduced new courses at its Wine Institute this year, including French Wine for Beginners. The series debuted in May with a workshop on the wines of The Rhône Valley, taught by Marika Vida Arnold, sommelier at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Philadelphia. In November staff sommelier Eric Cavatore will offer a class on the wines of Burgundy. A new "chocolate partner" for The Wine and Chocolate course was also added, the internationally acclaimed Lindt of Switzerland.

This fall Crossing Vineyards' East Falls location is hosting

its own wine classes, including Wine Tasting for Dummies, The ABCs of Wine Tasting and Wine List Survival Guide with Philadelphia wine writer and blogger, Collin Flatt.

Additionally, as part of its 2008 educational program, Crossing Vineyards' Wine Institute sponsored a private tour of France, which included a two day stay in Paris, travel to The Northern and Southern Rhône Valleys on the high speed bullet train (TGV), an olive oil tasting in Provence and a private cooking class at The Paul Bocuse Institute in Lyon.

New courses in the works for 2009 include Pairing Wine and Cheese and Champagne for Lovers, a special Valentine's Day class featuring the world's most romantic wine.

Having reached the five year milestone, the Carroll family is optimistic about the future. "We're proud of our accomplishments," says Tom Carroll Sr. "But here's the best part. We get to work with our son every day, to teach him what we know, to watch him become the man we knew he could be. As a parent, it doesn't get any better than that."

The popular local business's fifth birthday party will begin on Saturday, Oct. 11 and continue through Sunday, Oct. 12. It will include a celebration at the winery featuring live music, cake, free gift with case purchase and a birthday drawing with a grand prize valued at \$1,000.

For more information call 215-493-6500, ext. 19 or visit Crossing Vineyards Web site: www.crossingvineyards.com.

Christine Carroll is a wine educator and one of the principals of Crossing Vineyards and Winery. She is a former officer of the Pennsylvania Winery Association's Board of Directors and Secretary of the Bucks County Wine Trail. You can contact her at info@crossingvineyards.com.