

# Michigan's first winery got start in Windsor

St. Julian Winery in Paw Paw is this state's oldest winery. It was founded by Mariano Meconi in Windsor, Ontario, as the Italian Wine Company in 1921. After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Meconi moved his operation across the river to Detroit.

To be nearer a source of fresh grapes, the winery relocated to Paw Paw in 1937.

An anti-Italian sentiment, prevalent during World War II as America fought Fascist Italy, caused Meconi to rename the winery. He chose St. Julian, the patron saint of his village birthplace in Italy.

In the late 1940s, Meconi's sons Eugene and Robert and his son-in-

law Apollo Braganini expanded the winery's influence. Through the 1970s — a belated period of interest in dry wine nationwide — St. Julian Winery responded by planting French-American hybrid grape varieties, capable of withstanding the state's sub-freezing winter temperatures.

Since 1978, under the direction of David Braganini, Apollo's son, St. Julian Winery has become the state's largest single buyer of the hybrid grape varieties Chambourcin, Chelois, Cayuga White, deChaune Foch, Chancelor Noir, Seyval Blanc and Vidal Blanc. These varieties produce dry, semidry and sparkling wines.



focus on wine  
**Eleanor and Ray Heald**

ADDITIONALLY, St. Julian produces wine from two vinifera varieties, chardonnay and johannisberg riesling, that have shown promise of survival in the cold Michigan winters.

Within the domestic wine industry, winemakers make more hops, skips and jumps among wineries than a fast-paced checker game. This frequently causes product inconsistency. This is not the case at St. Julian since winemaker Chas Catherman has been with the winery since 1974. St. Julian Winery can lay claim to a host of firsts. Among them, it takes credit for being the first Michigan winery to establish a wine-tasting room in 1959. Currently, more than a quarter of a million visitors tour and taste at the winery each year.

Additional tasting centers and retail outlets are located throughout the state, in Frankenthum, Mackinaw City, Parma, Holly, Union Pier, Monroe and South Haven.

In the 1989 Michigan State Fair Wine Competition, St. Julian Winery won two first places (gold medals) for the 1988 Vignoles (Sweet Reserve) and 1988 Chancelor Noir.

With a production of 45,000 cases of wine, made entirely from Michigan grapes, St. Julian is Michigan's largest producer, laying claim to 37 percent of the total sales from Michigan's 20 wineries.

A recent tasting of some of the winery's newest releases gives clear indication that St. Julian has the potential for remaining at the top of the state's wine industry.

BECAUSE OF limited chardonnay plantings within the Lake Michigan Shore appellation, there are only 80 cases of the 1989 Chardonnay (\$14). Grapes for this wine were purchased at the premium price of \$1,500 per ton. The wine is Chablis-like, with typical earthy, stony aromas, but solid apple, pear flavors.

It was 100 percent barrel-fermented in one-year-old Nevers French oak and left four months sur lie for added complexity. Its crispness makes it a natural seafood accompaniment.

"Vignoles is an interesting wine to sell," Braganini contends. "People are unfamiliar with it and are surprised to find how comparable it is to the style of a California chardonnay."

## WINE SELECTION OF THE WEEK

1987 St. Julian Chancelor Noir (\$9.50). This wine spent a year aging in American oak and is highlighted by blackberry aromas and a touch of spice. It's a solid wine with a good finish. With the softness of a merlot, it is attractive and accessible.

## WINE BULLETIN BOARD

Red Wagon Wine Shoppes' Spring Wine Tasting of 50 wines, pates and cheeses, in conjunction with Peiruzzello's in Troy, 7-9 p.m. Monday, May 14. Cost is \$18 per person with reservations (435-0719) or \$20 at the door. Also featured, a tasting of the 1979 and 1983 Chateau Mouton Rothschild.

The 1988 Vignoles (\$9.50) is bone dry with good fruit characters. Its bold style is reminiscent of California chardonnay and its clean, fruit finish is appealing.

Punctual harvest (as opposed to late harvest) 1989 Riesling (\$9.50) showcases floral, apple blossom and apricot fruit with hints of orange zest. The 1.75 percent residual sugar is not evident on the palate because

it is balanced by high-side acidity which keeps it fresh and clean. It's a clear winner at this price.

"SEYVAL BLANC is our most popular wine," remarks Braganini. "We call it Paw Paw Piesporter." The 1989 version (\$5.50) is too sweet, by our standards, to accompany food, but it is a nice springtime sipper with fruit and mild cheese.

St. Julian produces an outstanding, lighter-style red wine from chambourcin grapes. The 1988 Chambourcin (\$9.50) sports berry, cherry, fruit characters with hints of American oak. It's soft and approachable — a red wine for people who say, "I don't like red wine."

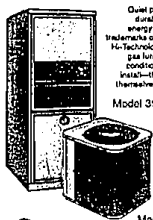
If you like cream sherry, St. Julian produces one of the best. It's labeled Michigan Light Solera Cream Sherry (\$7.50/500ml). Wines in the solera date back to 1971. It's full, rich, nutty, and a dessert in itself. It could be poured over vanilla ice cream or incorporated in a vanilla cheese cake recipe.

May is Michigan Wine Month. Celebrate it by trying wines from St. Julian or another of Michigan's wineries. New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland are some of the states that have developed a real grassroots pride in their wine industry. Let's get it going in Michigan.

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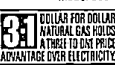


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## Supper dish is Mexican

AP — Making and serving this skillet supper dish is a snap. Toss all the ingredients into the skillet to cook. At mealtime, take the skillet to the table and serve.

### MEXICALI SKILLET

1 medium onion, chopped  
1 tablespoon cooking oil  
One 16-ounce can tomatoes  
One 4-ounce can diced green chili peppers, drained  
One 15-ounce can pinto beans  
1 cup water  
½ cup long-grain rice  
1 teaspoon chili powder

One 5-ounce package small smoked sausage links or 4 fully cooked smoked sausage links, cut into 16 pieces  
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (4 ounces)

In a 10-inch skillet cook onion in hot oil until tender but not brown. Cut up tomatoes. Add undrained tomatoes, chili peppers, undrained beans, water and uncooked rice to skillet. Stir in chili powder. Bring to boiling. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer 15 minutes or until rice is nearly tender.

Stir rice mixture. Arrange sausage pieces on top of mixture. Simmer, covered, 5 minutes more or until sausages are heated through and rice is tender. Sprinkle cheese over mixture in skillet. Cover and cook about 2 minutes or until cheese is almost melted. Makes 6 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 347 cal., 15 g. pro., 36 g. carb., 16 g. fat, 29 mg. chol., 549 mg. sodium. U.S. RDA: 24 percent vit. A, 45 percent vit. C, 15 percent thiamine, 13 percent riboflavin, 13 percent niacin, 18 percent iron.

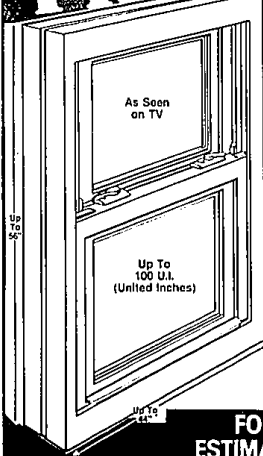


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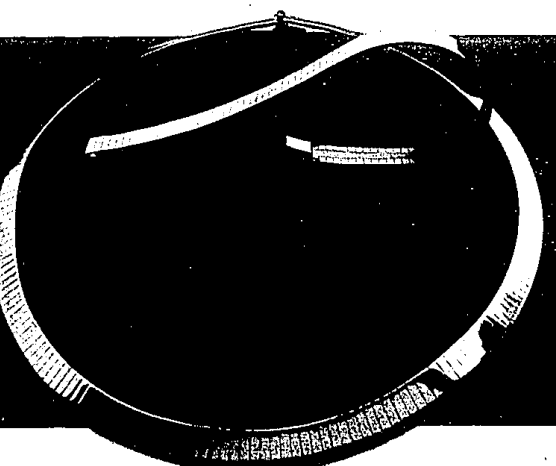
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