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# WINE

Pippin Hill, A Boutique Winery  
At Peace With The Land

Ian Robertson

**T**he Revolutionary War in America was finally tidied up in 1783. The press to move west into the Shenandoah Valley strengthened, creating a need for improved communications from the Virginia Piedmont through the Blue Ridge Mountains. A turnpike was agreed to in 1818, opening up Scottsville for trade via Rockfish Gap to Staunton.

This new turnpike intersected the Old Lynchburg Road (now Route 29 South) at recently named North and South Garden, a fertile lowland that was noted as favorable to farming. This increasingly busy intersection was soon host to a tavern, now Crossroads Tavern, and an inn. In later years, a number of smaller landholdings around this area were joined to create Bundoran Farm. Today, as a deliberate decision to maintain the area's inherent beauty, Bundoran is under an agricultural preservation ordinance allowing only selected agricultural ventures to be established. It is in this setting that Pippin Hill Farm and Vineyards was born.

The vineyard was conceived and designed by Dean and Lynn Andrews. A quick drive south of Charlottesville on Route 29 took me to the noted crossroads and within seconds I was entering the sweeping drive of the farm and vineyard. There is tangible beauty in the Piedmont's undulating fields and foothills. Pippin Hill sits at the foot of Tom Mountain looking across the valley to Long Arm Mountain. Traditional Virginia 1840s farm architecture is replicated here with modern touches



Traditional Virginia 1840s farm architecture is replicated here with modern touches as in the tasting room. (Photo by Jack Looney)



such as large windows in the tasting room to view the bucolic scene. The room, with its natural-wood construction, gives a warm and welcoming feel.

My visit happily coincided with the setting-off of the Waldingfield Beagles, America's oldest (1885) beagle pack,

which, with much barking, poured off across the fields to rummage in the foothills beyond. Kelly Knox warmly welcomed my wife and me before taking us on a tour of The Granary, a magnificent event room the outside of which is designed in the period barn style and is most elegantly propor-





Pippin Hill provides wine, fine food and an ambience to be sought out. (Photos by Jen Fariello)



tioned within. Here weddings, conferences and other gatherings are hosted. Windows look out onto panoramic views that are framed by the loggia where wine, food and easy conversation can be enjoyed. Amalia Scatena is the executive chef. Locally grown food is creatively prepared and paired with Pippin Hill wines and served in the fashion of a European winery.

On The Hill, some six acres of vines—Sauvignon Blanc, Petit Verdot and Viognier—are grown. In addition, a variety of locally grown grapes are custom-crushed to develop the elegant tastes of Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and the white Chardonnay. This year, vegetable, herb and fruit gardens will be established to augment other locally grown produce for use in the kitchen. All

vegetables are grown as sustainably as possible, working with the native landscape and leaving as small a footprint as reasonable.

Chatting over a fine bottle of their award-winning Meritage Reserve, Dean and Lynn Andrews stressed how much fun they were having. They realized early that wise heads were needed to guide the vineyard and the wine selections. Two names came to their attention, Chris Hill and Michael Shaps. Hill has over 30 years of experience in all aspects of Virginian vine cultivation and provides consulting services to many new and established vineyards. Shaps, wine maker and owner of Virginia Wine Works, has a consummate knowledge of wines and wine making. He provides custom crushing service for Pippin Hill.

Shaps found the concept of Pippin Hill being at one with the land and the sustainable growing of vines and local food both energizing and exciting. Hill thinks the highly talented and motivated staff at Pippin Hill has a major influence on their current success.

An ancient grape variety Viognier, possibly grown since 600 BC, is proving to be a specialty at Pippin Hill. It is not an easy grape to grow, but one that seems suited to the soil and aspect here. It produces a fine French-style white wine and is matched on the menu with seared Chesapeake Bay crabcakes, shaved fennel and blood-orange segments or Tuscan white bean bisque with rosemary focaccia and melted Fontina cheese. I'm sold—a perfect example of Dean and Lynn Andrews' goal, the thoughtful marriage of their wine and food.

Pippin Hill is at once exciting, fulfilling and restful as it provides fine wine, fine food and an ambience to be sought out. Ramble the fields and hills of Bundoran, relax with friends and be astonished by the sunsets.

#### Tasting Notes

**Pippin Hill Farm 2010 Chardonnay** is processed using a cool, slow fermentation for nine months in stainless-steel barrels for 90 percent of the time and neutral French oak barrels for 10 percent. It has a fresh pear and honeyed-fruit flavor.

**Pippin Hill Farm 2010 Chardonnay Reserve** has a complex medium body and a fruit-forward balance that complements a range of food.

**Pippin Hill Farm 'V'** is a French style Viognier that is designed to retain the natural brightness and balance that the varietal is known for, with an aromatic intensity as well as an element of minerality. It sports a rich palette structure with tropical aromas.

**Pippin Hill Farm 2010 Cabernet Franc** is made from thin-skinned grapes that ripen early. It is fruitier, more herbal and lower in



acidity. It is aged in French new oak barrels for 12 months and is a robust and full-bodied wine with distinctive, classic fruit notes.

**Pippin Hill Farm 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon** is made from a very small, thick-skinned grape, creating a high 1:12 ratio of seed (pip) to fruit (pulp). It has a robust balance with distinctive fruit notes.

**Pippin Hill Farm 2009 Merlot** is a smooth wine with a strong fruit-forward taste and brawny tannic structure. Some of the fruit notes in this wine are cassis, black cherries, blackberry and blueberry.

**Pippin Hill Farm 2010 Merlot Reserve** is a brawny, full-bodied wine with a distinctive range of notes. It is aged in new French oak barrels for 13 months. It ages well but is also enjoyable right now.

**Winemaker's Select - Meritage Reserve** is a traditional Bordeaux-style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon.

**Pippin Hill Farm Blanc de Blanc 2010** is a sparkling white wine made from 100 percent Chardonnay grapes.

**Pippin Hill Summer Farm Sparkling 2010** is a sparkling version of the Rosé.

**Petit Manseng Vin Doux Naturele** is made from grapes that are harvested late in the season so the residual sugars reach a higher level. It is fermented in stainless steel and new oak barrels and has a complex and soft, balanced taste.

Ian Robertson is a contributor to the PBS radio series *With Good Reason* and author of the new book, *Six Thousand Years Up the Garden Path*. His articles appear in *Fine Gardening* and *Central Virginia Gardener*. Robertson can be reached at (434) 978-1714.

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July-August. Taking squirrels during June is justified, won't hurt the overall population, and it's also a good time to get outdoors with a young hunter and teach him or her the art of stalking bushy tails. To find out where to squirrel hunt in June, go to [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov).

Jim Brewer has been writing outdoor columns for the Charlottesville *Daily Progress* and other Virginia papers for more than 20 years. He was co-founder of *Virginia Sportsman*.

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