

Wine Guide

America's 500 Best Wine Producers

Virginia

CLAIM TO FAME

Is Virginia the finest wine-producing state east of the Mississippi? Perhaps not quite yet, but the potential certainly appears to be there. Diligent, close-to-the soil homegrown winemakers, plus wealthy outside investors, plus a dose of Old World expertise (notably from the Zonin family at Barbourville Vineyards and consultants like Bordeaux's Stéphane Derenoncourt) are all coming together to produce delicious wines from classic Bordeaux varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc), from Viognier and Chardonnay, and from America's often very fine native Norton grape. It doesn't hurt that the state has a number of high-profile figures, such as Dave Matthews, Donald Trump and AOL's Steve Case, raising consumer interest with their wine projects here. Though wineries are scattered around the state, the majority are located east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, around Charlottesville (particularly in the Monticello AVA) and north toward Washington, D.C. There are already plenty of well-made Virginia wines to discover, and the future looks very bright indeed.

BOXWOOD ESTATE WINERY

Former Washington Redskins owner John Kent Cooke recruited Bordeaux consultant Stéphane Derenoncourt to help make the wines at his ambitious Virginia estate, located in Middleburg. Cooke's daughter, Rachel Martin, manages the 19-acre vineyard, where in 2004, consultant Lucie Morton began planting, focusing on the five main Bordeaux grape varieties. The farming practices combine old-fashioned hands-on vineyard care with high-tech touches such as a GPS system that records vineyard maintenance. The estate aims to top out at a boutique-size 3,500 cases, bottling three red blends and a rosé.

- **Boxwood Estate Boxwood / 2010 / Middleburg Virginia / \$\$**

Produced during a warm, dry growing season, this excellent Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot-Petit Verdot blend is a bit lighter, crisper and more aromatic than Boxwood's Topiary.

- **Boxwood Estate Topiary / 2010 / Middleburg Virginia / \$\$**

This supple, concentrated Cabernet Franc-Merlot blend benefited from a year in a mix of new and old French oak.