

## Fest a place to taste, sip

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By Bill Garlough

In the fall, roll out the barrel is a popular phrase. In Geneva, its roll out the red carpet.

The Geneva Chamber of Commerce is hosting its 27th annual Festival of the Vine on Sept. 12-14, a celebration of foods grown on vines -- grapes, gourds and pumpkins. Downtown Geneva is transformed into a large street festival that will host more than 75,000 guests. This three-day festival will offer a food and wine tasting, family games, live music and entertainment. More than 100 Geneva merchants offer sidewalk sales and public parking is free.

This family oriented event grows every year and offers new attractions and contests. Gorgeous Gourds is a new juried show featuring gourd art. Local artists will transform all shapes and sizes of gourds into unique works of art.

### Food and wine pairing

One of the highlights of any successful festival is its offering good food and tasty beverages. As grapes are grown on the vine, wine is the featured beverage at this event.

The most predominant area in the festival is Flavor Fare -- a huge white tent housing 18 Geneva restaurants offering samples of their signature items. To complement this dining experience, 17 different domestic and international wines will be available by the glass. To purchase wine or food, \$1 tickets are sold at the Geneva Chamber of Commerce booth. Food samples range from 1 to 4 tickets; a glass of wine ranges from 3 to 10 tickets.

My recommendation is to always start with lighter and slightly sweeter white wines and progress to light red and finish with heavier and more tannic reds. Here are some suggested food and wine pairings to try under the Flavor Fare tent. Each restaurant and menu item is followed by suggested wine and flavor notes:

**Inglenook Pantry's Green Tossed Salad:** Matua Sauvignon Blanc -- dry, crisp with grapefruit flavor.

**Gen-Hoe's Egg Roll or Lemon Chicken:** Beringer's Riesling -- semi-dry, apricot/peach flavors.

**Urban Grille's Cuban Pork:** Beringer's Riesling -- semi-dry, apricot/peach flavors.

**Chianti's Garlic Crab Pasta:** Chateau St. Jean Chardonnay -- soft, dry with ripe pear and oak.

**Josef's Elegante Meats' Italian Sausage:** Gabbiano Chianti -- dry red, soft spice and cherry notes.

**Mill Race Inn's Gazebo Burger:** Penfold's Shiraz -- rich, intense red with plum notes.

**Mill Race Inn's Beef Tenderloin:** Cellar #8 Cabernet -- full bodied with plum and cherry. Or Greg Norman Cab-Merlot -- rich, smooth with ripe berry



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My favorite wine that will be featured at the Flavor Fare is Etude Pinot Noir, with bright red cherry fruit, cinnamon spice and a silky mouth feel. If I wanted to sit back and enjoy a sip of something special, this Pinot Noir would be my first choice. It would pair well with a light cheddar, gruyere, Edam, Gouda or a triple cream brie such as Saint Andre.

Outside the Flavor Fare tent, several area restaurants have partnered with local wine merchants to offer unique wine pairings. One that sounds like fun is Graham's Fine Chocolates partnering with the Geneva Wine Seller to pair fine wines with hand dipped chocolates.

If you want to experience wines from the area, Galena Cellars Winery and Fox Valley Winery both have retail shops in Geneva featuring wines produced from Illinois grapes. A number of other local merchants will be sampling various wines throughout the event -- a number of them are free.

#### Other activities

Not to be missed is The Grape Stomp, where the public can stomp grapes to their heart's content. After your stomp, you can decorate a festival T-shirt free for the first 100 participants, with your very own grape footprints. Grapes for this traditional stomp are provided by Fox Valley Winery.

Here are a number of other activities available at the festival. For specific days and times, please see the event program or contact the Geneva Chamber of Commerce.

**Flower Market:** Flowers, fall decorations -- Courthouse lawn.

**Fall Harvest Market:** Baked goods, hand-crafted foods -- Courthouse parking lot.

**Kids Patch:** Games, crafts, entertainment -- Courthouse parking lot.

**Arts and Crafts Show:** More than 75 exhibitors -- S. Third and Campbell.

**Horse-Drawn Carriage:** Complimentary -- Courthouse.

**Sidewalk Art:** DIY, chalk provided -- James and S. Second St.

**Trolley Rides:** Complimentary -- six stops, see program.

**Geneva History Center:** Special event exhibits -- 113 S. Third St.

**Grape Stomping:** Age-old winemaking -- W. State and N. Fourth St.

**French Market:** European-Style Open Air Market -- S. Third and South streets.

**Live Auction:** Painted rain barrels -- 212 S. Third St.

What is fun about festivals is the variety of things to do. So whether you are looking for family entertainment, new expressions of art, sales at the local shops, live music or new taste treats to sip and nibble, Geneva's Festival of the Vine offers it all. Have a great time while receiving Geneva's red carpet treatment!

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