

Herald Lifestyles



Canning restaurant celiac friendly **D3**

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Ideal climate for vineyard prosperity



A bunch of *Vitis vinifera* grapes grown at the Lightfoot & Wolfville winery in the Annapolis Valley. **STEVEN ELPHICK**

NOVA KITCHEN

**CHARLES LEARY
VAUGHAN PERRET**

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“Plant your vineyard like you would invest your money,” Michael Lightfoot tells us about his decision to focus on planting *Vitis vinifera* several years ago. A risky business, but worth it.

Until recently, we personally had never gone so far, having accomplished small plantings of the European wine grape over the past 20 years, first in Louisiana and then at two sites in Nova Scotia. Lightfoot's heartfelt ebullience for his family-run, 40-acre oenological enterprise, Lightfoot & Wolfville, helped bely our doubts about a new vineyard we have just started planting in an austere region of southern Spain — a land representing the opposite extreme from Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley but with the same propensity for being something like a speculative stock purchase.

The Spanish dry and hot cli-

mate and the Nova Scotian humid and cool climate contrast starkly. Indeed, Annapolis and Andalusia represent the two antipodes of *Vitis vinifera* production. While in southern Spain, we struggle to choose grape varieties that ripen as late as possible — like Grenache or Mourvedre — here Mr. Lightfoot has planted varieties that normally ripen early to accommodate Nova Scotia's cool climate — varieties like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

In Canada, we count among the fortunate able to taste the complexity and breadth of wines produced in diverse climates thanks to the international wine trade, a market into which Nova Scotia has just dipped its toe. Lightfoot & Wolfville is prepared for export. We tasted four of Lightfoot's pure *vinifera* wines for the first time last month, meeting Michael's daughter Rachel Lightfoot in the wine making barn. Each of the Pinot Noir, Riesling, Chardonnay, and Pinot Rose exuded international-class character, expressive, full of complexity, all with a substantial finish and structure.

Why cultivating *Vitis vinifera*, in particular, matters to both

Michael and to us is perhaps both understandable and perhaps difficult to understand. Until just a couple years ago in Nova Scotia, making wine from pure French-American hybrid grapes formed the leading edge of viticulture. But that's rapidly changing just as it did in other cool-climate areas of the world where once no one would have contemplated making wine from native-grown vines: New Zealand, Niagara in Ontario, and the Finger Lakes of New York among them.

Living in Upstate New York from the late 1980s through the mid 2000s, we imbibed the evolution of Finger Lakes wines from hybrid-based plonk sold at the local farmers' markets, to the advent of 100 per cent Rieslings, Chardonnays and Gewürztraminers that reached international acclaim in less than 20 years, though the full history of Upstate *vinifera* started in the late 1960s and continues today. It's hard to believe that many New Zealand wine regions once relied on hybrids, while now their famous white wines find a niche on wine lists circling the globe, including on the shelves at NSLC.

“You can certainly see it in the awards,” says Lightfoot, alluding to how most of the winners over the past three years of the Lieutenant Governor Awards for Nova Scotia wine have been made from *vinifera* grapes, as opposed to the hybrids like Marechal Foch, New York Muscat, or L'Acadie Blanc. Often referred to as Old World grapes, *Vitis vinifera* likely originated in the Caucasus Mountains. This single species counts within it more than 5,000 named varieties, which should encourage all of us to think beyond trying just Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio next time we order a bottle of wine. *Vinifera* vineyards currently constitute the majority of the world's grape acreage, but not (yet, anyway) in Nova Scotia. Mr. Lightfoot sees the change happening up close.

Lightfoot notes that Nova Scotia *vinifera* has the potential to be refined into “very polished,” “very worldly” wines, ripe for lucrative export out of Nova Scotia, and that he represents the seventh generation of his family dedicated to agriculture in the province (the eighth if one counts his daughters, who also work at Lightfoot &

Wolfville). Nova Scotia's history with European wine grapes stretches that far back, too.

In 1634 the governor of Acadia, Isaac de Razilly, wrote, “Bordeaux vines have been planted that are doing very well,” making the first mention of wine grape cultivation anywhere in Canada. Razilly's vineyard in La Hève (now La Have — Riverport to be precise), unfortunately only lasted as long as Razilly himself, who died in late 1636. Those robust “Bordeaux vines” also constituted Canada's first encounter with growing *Vitis vinifera*. Lightfoot & Wolfville continues the purposeful Nova Scotian endeavour with quality wine.

Indeed, growing *vinifera* is the emerging trend with Nova Scotia grape growers, as is producing 100 per cent *vinifera* varietal wines like Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling. Some, like Chris and Peg Hawes at the four-acre Bear River Vineyards & Winery, planted pure *vinifera* vines well over 25 years ago. And the awards do tell the story. The Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence

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LOCAL ICON

40 years on, food truck rolls on with loyal spud followers

THE CHRONICLE HERALD

Forty years ago Bud and Nancy True opened up a food truck, the first of its kind, in Halifax. Slicing, frying and serving the best of P.E.I.-farmed potatoes to students and passersby, they cemented their spot in front of the former Halifax City Library.

According to current owner Jody LeBlanc a lot has changed in the food truck front world since 1977. “When Bud and Nancy started, it was park the truck and pay the meter,” he said. Taking ownership of the iconic downtown truck in 2015, LeBlanc continues

to remain true to the original methods that continue to draw crowds.

“We think of it as a legacy so you don't want to change an icon too much,” he said. “It's an old truck but it has what I think of as the essence of a food truck experience.”

The life of a food truck owner is highly rewarding, LeBlanc said, and the truck lends well to what he believes to be the vital interaction with customers. Boasting a larger than average service window, customers can watch LeBlanc cook. “I love that.”

Adding not much more than a few menu items over the years,

including fish for fish n' chips, hot dogs and sausages and poutine, the made-to-order truck from the 1970s continues to hold its own among the ever changing downtown landscape — merely a slight inconvenience that LeBlanc happily welcomes.

“I'm not anti-development. I think having more people downtown is a good thing,” says LeBlanc. “I just hope that there is room for food trucks and the green space where our customers like to eat in future Halifax, as it adds to the downtown vibe.”

The coveted and competitive

CONTINUED ON D4



Bud the Spud Fry Truck, on the corner of Grafton Street and Spring Garden Road on Thursday