

## FEATURES | WINE &amp; ICE CREAM

# Suddenly, Pa. wine's a real corker

**B**UZZ: Hey, Marnie, are Pennsylvania wines any good? Everyone is pushing "local" these days, and that makes sense for beer or tomatoes, but when I think of local wine, I think of Chateau Luzerne. It tasted like the street corner it was made on, 3rd and Luzerne.

**Marnie:** Buzz, you need to join the 21st century. Pennsylvania's wines are showing great potential these days. Last week, I helped judge a taste-off at Nectar restaurant, in Berwyn, between wines made in California and Pennsylvania. California took four of the six top slots, but the white wine that won the gold was a chardonnay from Chester County's Brandywine Valley. (The other Pennsylvania winner was Waltz Chardonnay from Lancaster County.)

**Buzz:** Chester County? I thought they only grew mushroom rooms there.

**Marnie:** See, that's a perfect example of the preconceptions that Pennsylvania wine has struggled to overcome. In any wine region, there's always a long learning curve as vintners discover which



## CHEAP BUZZ

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grapes perform best in which regions, and adjust their winemaking practices to local conditions. Up-and-coming regions are often judged most harshly on their home turf, since the local community gets exposed to early trial-and-error experiments and less ambitious wines.

This is hardly fair. Every region on Earth makes more modest wine than fine wine, but people don't write off California based on one taste of Thunderbird or Barefoot.

**Buzz:** But isn't it too cold here to make good wine? I thought California had the perfect wine-country climate.

**Marnie:** Not really. Our summers are actually quite warm, and it's the grape-growing season that's important.

Our main challenge is that we get more clouds, rain and humidity here, which increases prob-

lems with rot. But it's important to remember that California is hardly the "norm"; it ranks among the hottest of the world's fine-wine regions.

Southeastern Pennsylvania is much closer in climate to places like France and Italy, which have proven that such conditions can produce world-class wines.

This is one reason why our best wines display a European flavor profile — one that skews more toward food-flattering, earthy-herbal flavors and less toward the desert-like jamminess found in hot, arid places like California.

**Buzz:** Well, as long as it doesn't taste like 3rd and Luzerne, I'm down with it. ■

Marnie Old is a local sommelier and wine author known for practical advice with real-world relevance. Her newest book, *Wine: A Tasting Course*, is an illustrated crash course for the wine curious. Marnie also advises clients in the beverage and restaurant trades. Check her out at [MarnieOld.com](http://MarnieOld.com) or follow her on Twitter at [@MarnieOld](https://twitter.com/MarnieOld). Buzz's musings are interpreted by *Daily News* Assistant Managing Editor Gar Joseph.

## STATE STORE PICK OF THE WEEK

**Penns Woods Chardonnay  
Pennsylvania**

**\$24.99**

**PLCB Item No. 80161**

Pennsylvania's climate is better suited to producing white wines than red, as shown in the results of last week's blind taste test. No local red Bordeaux-style blends earned medals, but two of the top three chardonnays were from Pennsylvania. This top-scoring wine was balanced and delicious, like a tasty mash-up of classic French and modern California interpretations. It may be stocked in only a handful of state stores, but Pennsylvanians also can order it direct from the winery or visit its Chester County tasting room, one of many tasty stops on the Brandywine Valley Wine Trail.

— Marnie Old

