

DOC'S NEWS

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2011

ORGANIC WINES IN FLORIDA

MONTICELLO VINEYARDS & WINERY

By Doc Lawrence

MONTICELLO, FL—The road to Cynthia Conolly's organic farm goes through lands that once were populated by Spanish monks, Conquistadors and Apalachee Indians, with the center of daily living being missions with names like San Juan and San Pedro. The spiritual remnants of the long destroyed civilizations are retained. As you enter Monticello Vineyards & Winery, everything is manifested provided you come as a pilgrim and not solely as a tourist.

It was the monks and soldiers who first brought wines of Europe into Florida and then North America. The wines were for sacrament and dining. Dr. Conolly, a genuine wine pioneer, continues an ancient winemaking tradition that is now fully American

The wine is produced on a certified organic 50-acre farm and vineyard featuring native Muscadine grapes. No stranger to planting and

growing, Cynthia received her Ph.D. in Agricultural Education and Agricultural Engineering in 1980 from Iowa State University, the first woman in the country to achieve this degree. She worked internationally with food production in developing countries before starting her own farm in this bucolic region of the Sunshine State.

Her Muscadine wines are made with 100% organically grown Muscadine grapes that are grown, picked, and processed on-site at the farm winery. Florida Red, Carlos and Magnolia varietals are popular along with a few blends and after an early morning tasting, we selected bottles of semi-dry wines to serve along with local goat, lamb and Jefferson County farm vegetables for an outdoor feast for the ages at Troy and Gretchen Avera's magnificent Avera-Clarke House in nearby Monticello.

Situated in the Red Hills bioregion of Jefferson County, Florida, the winery features organic Muscadine wines and is a joy to visit. Over 18 different varieties of Muscadine grapes—all USDA certified organic—are grown on the farm.

Muscadine is native to America and wines made from them rank high in consumer popularity. They are not all sweet. The wines are as sweet or dry as the winemaker chooses, just like Cabernet Sauvignon.



CYNTHIA'S ORGANIC WINES ARE DELICIOUS

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ABOUT ME



Doc Lawrence

Veteran journalist, producer and broadcaster. Former editor, The Nationwide News and host of popular drivetime show, Your Atlanta Gourmet. Columns appear throughout the country and new radio show, Southern Ways with Carl White and Doc Lawrence debuts soon. Managing editor, www.winesdownsouth.com. Regular columns: Gourmet Highway, New South Gourmet, Southwind, Sips Across America, Gulfwind, Spirits of the South, Sips Along The Way, City Lites, Dining With Doc.

I will return here for the late summer harvest. Somehow, I know the ruins of the ancient missions are near Cynthia's fields. I'll search for them, listening for spirits, carrying along a chilled bottle of her magnificent wine named Magnolia, believing this is what pilgrims should do when walking sacred land.

RESOURCES:

www.monticellowinery.com

www.averaclarke.com

www.monticellojeffersonfl.com

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