

# Florida Wines

## The Health Benefits of Muscadine Grapes

by Yolanda Roundtree

The next time you sit down for dinner, don't forget the bottle of wine – Florida wine that is. Most Florida wines are made from muscadine grapes – a variety of grapes that contain the highest level of antioxidants ever tested in a natural product.

Muscadine grapes are fat free, high in fiber and high in antioxidants. The health benefits of wine have been studied for years and research has indicated that moderate drinking can reduce heart attacks by 50 percent. According to Dr. Serge Renaud, a French scientist and pioneer in alcohol research "Antioxidants in wine help prevent damage to blood vessels, help prevent heart disease .... as many as 400 other chemicals in wine raise the level of HDL in blood. HDL is the good cholesterol that helps prevent heart attack and stroke."

You never thought that having a glass of wine with dinner had a purpose other than helping to wash down that last savory bite of chicken, beef or fish. However, the health benefits of drinking wine are greater when wine was consumed with meals instead of consumed by itself, according to Dr. Mauizio Trevisan from the University of

Buffalo. "Drinking with dinner assures that the protective effects of alcohol are strongest in the evening, when fats from the dinner meal circulate through the bloodstream and carry over to the next morning, when most heart attacks take place."

According to *M.D. News Magazine*, recent tests show that resveratrol from muscadine grapes can block cancer cells from attacking organs, thus preventing the spread of the disease once it starts. Programs at the Strang Cancer Prevention Center in New York City showed that resveratrol was very effective as an inhibitor of the growth of COX, a compound present in breast cancer and other cancers. Compounds that inhibit COX offer promise as a cancer prevention agent by making cancer cells vulnerable to the body's natural defenses. Initial studies showed that resveratrol inhibits tumor growth at three different stages – initiation, promotion and progression. Growing research also notes that additional benefits are in the grapes themselves. "If you don't drink wine, try some jams or a muffin made from muscadines," says Dr. Betty Ector, nutrition researcher at Mississippi State University. "They're an even better source of resveratrol. One half serving (two fluid ounces) of unfiltered muscadine juice, one serving of muscadine jam, one medium muffin, or one-tenth serving of muscadine sauce contains about the same amount of resveratrol as four fluid ounces of red wine."

Florida has 11 unique vineyards throughout the state that produce wines from a variety of muscadine grapes and other Florida agricultural products. **Lakeridge Winery & Vineyard** in Clermont, Florida offers an assortment of award winning wines and hosts 12 annual festivals. **San Sebastian Winery** in St. Augustine, Florida offers 12 varieties of wine including

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Florida Wines	Best with...	Where to find it?
<i>Orange Sunshine</i> Made from 100% Florida orange juice	Seafood, poultry, pizza, desserts	Florida Orange Groves, Inc. & Winery
<i>Eden Stars</i> A carambola fruit wine; lightly sweet, clean & crisp	Salads, seafood, light dishes	Eden Vineyards & Winery
<i>40 Karat</i> Made from fresh Florida carrots – oak aged dry white wine.	Shellfish, spicy foods	Florida Orange Groves, Inc. & Winery
<i>Cream Sherry</i> Full bodied, sweet, rich amber color perfect accent to any dessert	Desserts, add to soups and stews	San Sebastian Winery
<i>Rosa</i> Rich in aroma, fruit flavor, crisp & light	Ham, finger foods	San Sebastian Winery
<i>Wildflower Honey Muscadine</i> Carlos muscadines with locally grown wildflower honey	Fruit, cheese, grilled chicken/fish	Chautauqua Vineyards
<i>Muscadine Blush</i> Grown from black muscadine grapes – blush table wine	Enjoyable with any meal	Rosa Fiorelli Winery, Inc.
<i>Carlos</i> Slightly sweet wine – a Southern favorite	Grouper, chicken	Dakotah Winery & Vineyards
<i>Casa Del Sol Florida Key Lime</i> Tangy and refreshing with the essence of key lime	Caesar salad, seafood	Florida Estates Winery
<i>Conquistador Port</i> Light, fruity red wine	Light pasta dishes	Three Oaks Winery
<i>Sunblush</i> Delicately colored, but richly flavored	Finger foods	Lakeridge Winery

one sparkling and two dessert wines. In Defuniak Springs, Florida **Chautauqua Vineyard** invites you to taste the wines that have earned the winery over 140 medals and awards in wine competitions since it opened in 1989. **Rosa Fiorelli Winery** is a family owned and operated vineyard in Manatee County that has expanded to over 10 acres. In 1998, **Dakota Winery and Vineyard** in Chiefland, Florida planted 200 muscadine grapevines. Today, they have over 12 acres with 6,000 vines.

**Florida Estates Winery** set on a 3,600 acre plantation in Land O' Lakes, offers a unique Florida experience with a variety of Florida Vinifera Hybrid wines. **Emerald Coast Wine Cellars** in Destin, offers a variety of wines made from native muscadine grapes and blueberries. They also offer complimentary wine tasting seven days a week. In North Florida, **Monticello Vineyards & Winery** specializes in wine made from certified organically grown muscadine grapes. St. Petersburg, Florida is the home of **Florida Orange Groves, Inc. & Winery**. The Shook family has developed a line of unique wines since 1991, made with ultra-premium Florida citrus and berries. **Three Oaks Winery**, located in Washington County produces light, fruity red wines made from Florida hybrid bunch grapes -"Conquistador" and white wines made from the Carlos muscadine grapes. Florida's oldest operating winery, **Eden Vineyards & Winery** produces six grape wines ranging from an elegant, flinty, dry white, a Merlot-style red wine, and a desert wine designed for chocolate lovers. For more information about Florida vineyards contact the Florida Grape Growers Association at (863) 678-0523 or visit [www.fgga.org](http://www.fgga.org).

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