

Spitting in class Master taster grads earn certificate

Ted Whipp
The Windsor Star

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

An in-depth wine tasting course offered by Niagara College and hosted by Colchester's Viewpointe Estate Winery will continue this fall.

People from all walks of life have signed up for the first series in a successful program taught by John Carnahan, a recognized wine expert whose course instruction is conducted separately from his work as LCBO product consultant.

Students receive a master taster's certificate from Niagara, following successful completion of six courses of study.

While it may seem a lark to sit, swirl, sip and spit wines for a class about the vintages, it's hardly a hobby seminar or casual tutored tasting. The aim is to fine-tune the art of tasting and analyzing wines, according to course material. The successful student will be "well-versed in identifying grape variety, wine region styles and various production methods used in the creation of wines."

The course involves a strong commitment, Carnahan cautioned after a class. "But it's a serious course," he said, adding he plans to continue teaching it for the community college.

In a word, the course program is "intense" say the adult students at a recent session in the winery's attractive culinary arts centre.

"I've taken post-secondary courses, and I can tell you absolutely this is one of toughest courses I've ever taken," said Amy Van Hintum, Viewpointe's retail manager. "I came into this class knowing I like wines. I've gained such an appreciation of wines. I've gained confidence about wines. It is a fantastic course."

Elise Croizier, 46, of Windsor, who's taken the course since May last year, thinks she's sipped and sampled upwards of 500 wines the world over as part of her studies.

As a bartender with extensive experience, Croizier thought she knew all there was to know about wines until she signed up.

"This class opened my eyes, and I want to learn more."

In one session, students parsed, dissected and unravelled flavours and tasting notes in dessert wines and icewines.

Each sip along with each word took on an intensity, as the students aimed to reveal and learn the nuances of the wines, their bouquets and tasting notes along with the foods nibbled and savoured with them.

At another point, Carnahan coaxed the class of about 15 to learn the differences and the complementary flavours. "It's all champagne. But they all have a different style," he advised them of the champagne wineries. "They each have their own personality."

Untangle the flavours, he urged the class. "What's in it? Find out what it's doing and why. Break the food down. Break down the wine. What is taking the front seat? What is taking the back seat?"

Remember, he reminded them, whether it's the food or the wine "one has to run the show."



CREDIT: Getty Images Files

John Carnahan's six-part course on wine expertise can be intense but rewarding.

Graham Keogh, a financial planner from Windsor said the class helps him "make sense" of the wines and foods he tastes.

Jim Small, of North Ridge, who blogs about wines on his website www.essexcountywinereport.vox.com and is a civil engineer, said the course has made an impact. "It's been really good. It's not fluffy at all."

Like others, he points to the quality of instruction from Carnahan. "He knows his stuff," Keogh agrees.

"He makes us want to learn," says Croizier.

- - -

MORE INFO

- For more information on the master taster course, contact Viewpointe Estate Winery, 151 County Road 50 E., just east of Colchester. Call 519-738-0690 or see www.viewpointewinery.com.

- For registration and course information, contact Niagara College through its website online at www.niagaracollege

.ca/ce or by phone at 905-735-2211, ext. 7510.

- The course is open to anyone seeking in-depth wine appreciation and education; no previous instruction is required.

- The master taster course requires six courses for certification and each relates to the next in the schedule offered. Each course costs \$300 to \$400.

- Classes for the next session start Sept. 14. Plan for the session includes a class on Monday nights and a class Tuesday nights for the elective course in the curriculum.

© The Windsor Star 2009

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.