

Pop a Cork!

Wine drinkers have two reasons to celebrate

BY MARIA BELLOS

Wine drinkers: Drink up! There's a new law and a new winery in Chesapeake Country. Beginning this month, you can take home a doggy bottle from your restaurant meal. And you just might want to take home a bottle from the new Fridays Creek winery in Calvert County.

The recorking law benefits wine drinkers by giving them incentive to try new wines, as restaurants tend to limit the number of wines sold by the glass. Now, diners can order a bottle — without feeling obliged to finish it. The law is potentially beneficial to drivers and restaurants as well, as diners can enjoy as much wine as is prudent without feeling they're wasting money and

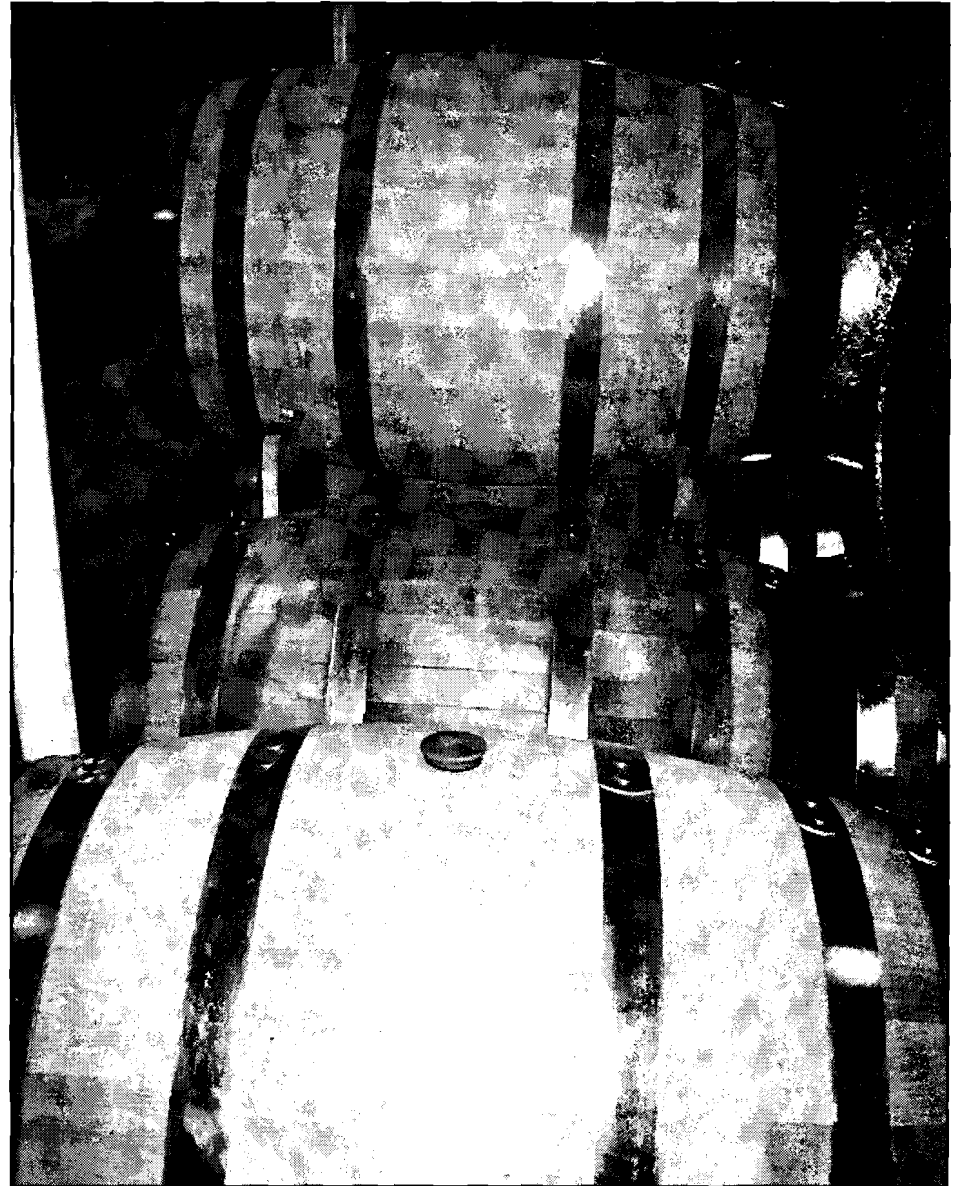
restaurants can sell more wine. Maryland joins 30 states that allow recorking, according to Melvin Thompson of the National Association of American Wineries.

One caveat for taking wine home: The recorked bottle is considered an "open container" by Maryland law. You must transport recorked wine in a "non-passenger" area of your vehicle. A locked glove compartment, trunk or SUV cargo area all qualify. The National Association of American Wineries is pushing restaurateurs to educate consumers about how to bring wine home legally.

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The recorking decision and an April decision allowing Maryland wineries to distribute wine within the state were especially welcome to the state's young industry, which numbers 20 with the addition of Fridays Creek winery. The winery, Calvert County's third (Anne Arundel has none), expects to open in August. Now the wineries can distribute to in-state retailers

and restaurants without using a wholesaler, which would cut into profits.





Like many of the other wineries, Fridays Creek was inspired by a hobby. Frank Cleary Sr., of Owings, served his homemade wine at Thanksgiving dinners to rave reviews, which got him thinking about turning pro. He owned property on Fridays Creek in Owings, where he planted some preliminary vines and commenced winemaking part-time. As his interest rose, so did his plans.

"My father doesn't do anything small," said Frank Cleary Jr., spokesman for Fridays Creek. The winery has 10 acres of vines, nine fermentation tanks, a chiller and a dedicated tasting room, all family built and operated.

Once licensed, the Clearys hired Tom Payette, who has worked with California wineries as well as the Gray Ghost winery in Amissville, Virginia, as a winemak-

ing consultant. Payette suggested types of wines for the Clearys to make. Among his recommendations were a Merlot, a Cabernet and a Geisenheim grape-based wine, its name yet to be determined.

Now the Clearys are busily readying the winery for its opening this month. Wine will be sampled and sold on premises.

Fridays Creek will open Fridays through Sundays, noon to 6PM. Tastings of six to eight wines will be available for a minimal charge: 410-286-9463. 🍷

About the Author: Before coming to Chesapeake Country, New Yorker Maria Bellos published in home-state newspapers, Washington, D.C., magazines and trade journals. Her last story for Bay Weekly was Confessions of a Certified Safe Boater, Vol. xiv, No. 27: July 6).