

Kittery's Anneke Jans

Cellardoor Winery & Vineyard

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September 2008

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+

The New Pioneers

Breaking ground and growing grapes in Lincolnville



PROFILE Cellardoor Winery & Vineyard
by Joshua Bodwell
Photography Irvin Serrano

Along the Maine coast, the summer offerings within view of the ocean are plentiful. But sometimes, the most satisfying adventures in life require us to step off the beaten path.

Just six miles from Camden's Main Street, down a rolling road that edges Megunticook Lake, is a surprising swath of land that is both classic Maine and decidedly foreign: a sixty-eight-acre farm, the last completely intact land grant in Waldo County, that has been given over to the operations of Cellardoor Winery & Vineyard and the enterprise of grape growing.

Cellardoor's little valley property has a rare quality to it, as though summer is holding its breath. The breeze is warm and kicks up the smells of grass and forest. Down the steeply sloping hill—beyond the 200-year-old barn and past the languid, primordial pond and a smattering of fruit trees—the eight-acre vineyard is a tangle of ripening

grapes and earthy grape vines, which wind upward and reach out like a million arms opening to embrace the sky and countryside.

The valley and farm are at once romantic, inspiring, and reenergizing. These qualities, wedded to their obvious passion for forging new paths, enticed co-owners Bettina Doulton and John Tynan to purchase the farm almost two years ago.

When Doulton and Tynan discovered Cellardoor, it had already shed its old life as a dairy farm and had been, for the preceding decade, a vineyard. The decaying barn, however, was dark, bow-roofed, and unwinterized. The whole place needed a serious touch of tenderness. The pair bought the property in February 2007—a fact that marks them as true visionaries, since the grounds were snow covered, the wind was whipping, and the air was bitterly cold. Throughout that year, the pair made uncompromising investments in the vineyard, buildings, and



grounds with the help of Phi Home Designs, among others.

The Doulton-Tynan partnership was born out of a shared vision, but also from a health scare that was, ultimately, cathartic.

In 2006, having spent two decades in the high-stress world of portfolio analysis and management in Boston, Doulton was diagnosed with cancer. Though she persevered, the experience was eye-opening. “The eighty-hour work weeks didn’t seem so exciting after that,” she says, shaking her head.

Around this same time, Tynan, who had worked in human resources all over the country and had landed in Doulton’s Boston office, discovered Cellardoor with his wife while they were dropping off their children at summer camp. The farm was on the market for only the third time in a century. When Tynan returned to the office, the lifelong wine aficionado’s excitement for the property and its potential

Italy? Napa Valley? Lincolnville! Cellardoor Winery & Vineyard co-owners John Tynan and Bettina Doulton (opening spread).

Doulton and Tynan refurbished a decrepit Victorian house and opened the Cellardoor Villa in June at the intersection of Rt. 1 and Rt. 90 in Rockport (above, top). “We have ended up with two locations that each has their own distinct personality in the community,” says Doulton—for as close to Camden as the Cellardoor farm is (just six miles away), it feels like a different world.

Back at the Cellardoor farm, the wine tasting never ends (above, bottom). The 200-year-old barn was outfitted with an elegant horseshoe-shaped bar designed by Phi Home Designs and built by E.H. Fortner.

“We don’t know all the answers, but we know the questions.”
John Tynan
on running a
vineyard in Maine



was infectious. Doulton, already primed for a major life change, was quickly sold on the idea. A few short months later, the pair partnered to purchase the vineyard.

Today, Cellardoor’s wine list is seventeen bottles deep and includes Capo di Monte, a complex merlot; a surprisingly crisp chardonnay; their bright Amorosa dessert wine; and two blueberry wines. The dark old barn is now filled with light and houses a busy tasting bar and a gift shop filled with every wine accoutrement imaginable. Doulton and Tynan now spend their days spreading a passion for Maine wine.

Many people arrive at Cellardoor and immediately inquire in a befuddled tone, “You grow grapes...in Maine?” It’s a fair question considering the state’s infamously long winters, aura of hardscrabble living, and reputation for potato farming.

“Anyone can grow grape vines in Napa,” says Doulton without condescension, but with a tone that implies, *What’s the challenge in that?* “It’s the uniqueness of Maine that makes all of this so exciting.”

Tynan continues the thought: “We see ourselves more as pioneers up here because we’re inspired by people—whether in the arts, literary, or culinary worlds—who see something before others do. We hope people look back at this vineyard in ten years and say it was genius.” Tynan often evokes the name of Dr. Konstantin Frank, who began the wine revolution in upstate New York in the 1960s that disproved the naysayers. Closer to home, Tynan draws inspiration from Eliot Coleman, Maine’s renowned four-season farmer.

By planting hardy varieties of vines and hybrids that can handle temperatures as extreme as thirty-five degrees below zero, Doulton and Tynan are making serious advances. Sunlight—or, more precisely, getting a growing season with enough sunny days over fifty degrees—is Cellardoor’s biggest challenge in reaping a good crop. But something is working: last year the vineyard produced 24,000 bottles of wine, but they are on track to triple that output this year with an anticipated 71,000 bottles. “That increase means we won’t have to simply put out every drop of wine we’ve produced,” says Tynan. “It will give us more flexibility to experiment and to let more of our wine age.”

The push for innovation and evolution seems endless at Cellardoor. Solar panels provide the energy for the barn’s radiant-heat floors, and rainwater is collected to irrigate the fields. The seventy-five-year-old chicken coops just got a facelift, and Tynan is already scheming to build greenhouses.



Cellardoor Winery & Vineyard: cellardoorvineyard.com, 207-763-4478

PROFILE Cellardoor



After and Before: Wine ages in wooden barrels below the Cellardoor barn (above, left), and in the distance beyond the farm's little pond are the vineyards where the grapes soak up the sun and grow plump for the wine press (above, right).

The Cellardoor Villa now stands like a beacon, attracting wine lovers and then steering them farther up the road to the vineyards and barn (opposite, middle).

The barn's original silo was left untouched (but for a good cleaning!) as the barn around it was renovated (opposite, bottom). **The winding staircase, fabricated by nearby Rockport Steel, is freestanding and never actually touches the precious silo but, rather, curves within inches of it.**

2nd Annual "Romp & Stomp" Grape Harvest Festival

Remember that great scene from *I Love Lucy* when Lucy and her friend Ethel stomp around barefoot in a big vat of grapes? Did you ever secretly wish that you could roll up your pants and give it a try? Join Cellardoor all day on Saturday, October 18, for Old World grape crushing, BBQ, live music, hot air balloon rides, and many other activities.

"We are trying to find things from the past that have been left behind," says Tynan, "and maybe find some new ways of doing things, too." For example, while Cellardoor wines are crafted in Italian stainless-steel vats or in barrels made of Eastern European, French, or American oak, Tynan can't help but look at the native Maine forests and wonder, *Has anyone ever made a*

wine barrel out of that? "We don't know all the answers," Tynan is fond of saying, "but we know the questions."

The wine, both Doulton and Tynan note, is "the platform" for many other projects, such as cooking classes, wine camps (which allow participants to lead the life of a vintner), or next month's second annual "Romp & Stomp" harvest festival.

But even if the wine is just "the platform" to launch other ventures and events, the wine is also the principal reason why Doulton and Tynan are here. With a pleasant lack of stuffiness, they regularly discuss their favorite bottles and share choice dishes to pair with each wine.

"People ask if we've ever won any wine awards," says Tynan, "and my answer is always that, if we have, it shouldn't matter—it should be about the taste."

"We believe that you should drink what you *like*," says Doulton.



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