

# WINE

## The French Connection Delfosse Vineyard and Winery

Daniel Mahdavian

When a Frenchman and his bride decided to pick a place to make their own wine, their search for land and terroir brought them to Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. After many years of looking at various orchards, farms and rugged hillside properties, the Delfosses fell in love with a 320-acre piece of land in Nelson County. Delfosse Vineyards and Winery not only offers gourmet dining, weddings and other family events but also makes fabulous and accessible Virginia wines that I first tasted in 2005.

Claude Delfosse, a French romantic at heart, grew up in Paris and moved to America after attending college on a Fulbright scholarship. He worked as a scientist in the aeronautics field in California for more than a decade, focusing on space engineering. After visiting both the East and the West coasts, he moved back to France and traveled the French wine country, including the Loire Valley where Sauvignon Blanc is king. He was inspired by the simple but high quality of the wine-making life. Claude returned to California, but Napa Valley land prices were too high for the young Frenchman to start his dream winery. So he moved east, where land was affordable and reminded him of home.

Delfosse Vineyards and Winery is located on the land where there was once an organically farmed apple orchard. The taste and aroma of crisp apples occasionally ooze through the white wines made from the grapes grown on the 20 acres planted on this picturesque property. A fan of high



Claude sharing his colorful palette of wines

quality red Bordeaux wines, Burgundy Pinot Noirs, and Loire Valley white wines, Claude wants nothing but perfection. He and his wine-making team are hard at work to ensure that their wines maintain a high quality French style as well as their Virginia terroir.

What is good wine without good food? Genevieve Delfosse oversees not only the business of wine and guest relations at the winery, but also the kitchen where she cooks sumptuous French dinners, well paired with her husband's delicious wines, for up to 50 guests.

Here are the highlights of what we tasted together:

2007 Delfosse Deer Rock Farm White is a blend of equal parts of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc that had been aged in neutral French oak. This is a well balanced wine that I could enjoy every day. It tastes like ripe citrus fruit, with a nice round finish and bright acidity. A refreshing wine to sip by the grill.

2007 Delfosse Sauvignon Blanc, estate bottled, was a rare treat. This is not a grape that typically grows well in Virginia because of the unpredictable climate. But the Delfosses have hit a home run with this wine. A clean, crisp white wine that is the king of the hill for this winery.

2005 Delfosse Reserve Chardonnay



**The sloped vineyards at Delfosse**

Monticello tasted as if I had taken a bite out of a just-picked crunchy, golden apple. It was smooth in taste, bright in color, and offered a long ripe finish. A real champion of a Virginia chardonnay that put a smile on my wife's face!

2006 Delfosse Reserve Viognier Monticello is a tropical-fruit bomb, a fiery redhead dressed in cool green gold! It is rich, with a spicy mélange of stone fruit and caramelized pineapples riding high on a *Condrieu* backbone. With candied lemon and butterscotch on the finish.

2006 Delfosse Rose is another wonderful blended wine made of Cabernet Franc and Merlot. A cool dry blush wine that quenched my thirst on a hot summer day. It shows hints of red strawberries and refreshing watermelon with a light hint of white pepper and sea salt.

2006 Delfosse Merlot was my spicy cherry pie! It was juicy, fruity, complex and concentrated. It was a true expression of what the vines can produce on the terraced hillside of the winery. This wine has what it takes to compete with any good Pomerol or Pauillac, with its core of dark cassis and long feminine tannins.

2007 Delfosse Malbec Estate, just bottled, is a powerful and masculine wine

that tastes of edgy dark chocolate. This Spanish variety shows incredible promise for many beautiful vintages to follow.

Most of Delfosse's reserve wine bottles are adorned with the festive and playful Toulous-Lautrec inspired labels. What could be next on Claude's list of things to accomplish along with his busy schedule of hosting and speaking at wine dinners all around the state? Calvados and Port-like beverages are in the works!

For more information on wines and events, see [www.delfossewine.com](http://www.delfossewine.com).

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Daniel Mahdavian is the owner of Refuel Consultants, a hospitality and liquid-assets consulting company based in Washington, D.C. Daniel writes for consumer and trade publications regularly. He invests in wine for collectors and manages private and corporate wine-related events. He is always on the road to vineyards around the world in search of the next good-valued delicious bottle of wine for you. Questions are welcome at [wine@refuelconsultants.com](mailto:wine@refuelconsultants.com).