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WRITTEN BY [HOLLY BROOKE](http://eatmagazine.ca/author/holly-brooke/) ([HTTP://EATMAGAZINE.CA/AUTHOR/HOLLY-BROOKE/](http://eatmagazine.ca/author/holly-brooke/)) |
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 JUL 20, 2015

Taste the Difference: Opening Night



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The 7th annual **Taste: Victoria's Festival of Food and Wine** (<http://www.victoriataste.com/>) has impressed its attendees once again with the best of British Columbia's wine and Vancouver Island cuisine. The four-day festival offered individual tasting workshops, seminars and events.

This year's Taste got off to a great start with a jam packed opening night, **Taste the Difference** (<http://www.victoriataste.com/taste-the-difference/>). The 3 hour wine and cuisine tasting was held at the Hotel Grand Pacific in both ballrooms, showcasing the finest of British Columbia's food and wine.

Guests walked the red carpet before entering and once inside were met by event volunteers handing out a detailed program booklet. The program outlined each booth location and included a section for jotting down tasting notes.

Once the initial frenzy had settled, guests mingled between rooms meeting winemakers, proprietors, sommeliers, chefs and suppliers with a chance to sample over 100 wines from 30 of our provinces best wineries and try cuisine from some of Vancouver Island's best chefs' creations.

“*The focus of the event is to present wines made solely from BC grapes and food made from locally grown ingredients.*” ”

Founder and producer of Taste, Kathy McAree has remained steadfast in her commitment to ensure the festival flows with a conscience. The number one priority: local, seasonal and sustainable. Taste seeks to support the local economy and its food and wine industry while giving the public an opportunity to discover interesting wines and uniquely prepared foods.

This year we were lucky to see so many Vancouver Island wineries represented and some of the Okanagan's top wineries. Top Island restaurant chefs were serving locally inspired cuisine from line caught, wild salmon and pork belly to oyster chowder, maple bacon tarts and house-made gelato.

Noteworthy Food and Wine

Wines



(<http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Taste-Pic.1.jpg?ff897b>)
 Averill Creek Vineyards wines. Photo by Rebecca Wellman

[Averill Creek Vineyard](http://www.averillcreek.ca)(<http://www.averillcreek.ca>)

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One of Vancouver Island's largest estate winery, *Averill Creek* showcased several wines and an excellent 2012 Pinot Gris. Winemaker Daniel Dragert noted that this particular vintage was allowed an extra hang-time due to dry fall weather. The wine is textural, full bodied and plays well on the pallet. It pairs well with Vancouver Island seafood, particularly crab. The 2014 Gewürztraminer was dry, aromatic and crisp with lots of fruit character. The richness and acidity of this wine stands up well to spicier foods.

Blue Grouse Estate Winery(<http://www.bluegrouse.ca>)

As one of Vancouver Island's oldest estate vineyard, Blue Grouse produces exceptional Cowichan Valley wines – They showcased re-branded labels and touted their new state of the art wine making facility and a brand new tasting room. The *Sparkling Paula* has been well received says winemaker Bailey Williamson “it's one of the biggest growing segments of wine at the moment.” The grapes, pinot gris, ortega, mueller thurgau, are 100% estate grown. If you're attending any special events and want to bring a gift, bring a bottle of *Sparkling Paula*!

Blue Mountain Vineyard and Cellars(<http://www.bluemountainwinery.com>)

Blue Mountain focuses exclusively on estate-grown, hand-harvested grapes from their 31 hectare estate. They showcased 3 whites and an impressive “Gold Label” Brut sparkling wine made from a blend of 2/3 pinot noir and 1/3 chardonnay and a touch of pinot gris for a crisp lemon finish.



(<http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Taste-Pic.22.jpg?fb897b>)

de Vine Vineyards. Photo by Rebecca Wellman

de Vine Vineyards

(<http://www.devinevineyards.ca>)

Located on the Saanich Peninsula, de Vine Vineyards has one of Canada's largest plantings of Gruner Veltliner. 100% estate grown the 2014 “Gru-V” has lovely citrus under tones and a nice minerality. It goes well with Asian food and anything spicy. The property also produces pinot noir and pinot gris grapes without the use of pesticides or synthetic fertilizers.

40 Knots Vineyard and Estate Winery

(<http://www.40knotswinery.com>)

Comox Valley's 40 Knots vineyard brought out lively and balanced wines full of flavour and character. The 2012 Knots Pinot Gris was vibrant and crisp. It's a great lunch and patio wine with lively green-apple acidity. The *Safe Haven* had a deep earthiness and dark cherry to it with a hint of spice.

Kalala Organic Estate Winery(<https://www.kalala.ca/>)

Certified organic since 2010, Kalala Winery poured several varieties, two of which I tried: The *Harmony White* from predominantly Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris grapes – aromatic, floral and fruity – (pairs well with summer foods such as light pasta and a crisp salad) and the 2013 Gewürztraminer a dry-style wine with pink grapefruit and lychee aromas.

Sea Star Estate Farm & Vineyards(<http://www.seastarvineyards.ca>)

Pender Island's Sea Star Winery was in-house presenting their newest vintage the 2014 Salish Sea, Encore, Blanc de Noir and my personal favourite; Ortega in a blend of Muller Thurgau and Siegerrebe. It's bright, floral and crisp with light acidity and an apricot-melon fruit flavour.

[MooBerry Winery www.mooberrywinery.com]

Mooberry Winery(<http://www.mooberrywinery.com>), located on Morningstar Farm, alongside Little Qualicum Cheeseworks in Parksville, produces 100% fruit wines. Winemaker, Phil Charlebois points to the Blackberry and Raspberry as their most popular wines having a slight fennel or licorice aroma and pairs well with heavier

meats. The Gooseberry pairs well with Thai and curry and Qualicum Cheese works Hot
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Vancouver Island Cuisine

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(http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Aura_778.jpg?ff897b)

Aura's Yuzu Miso Salmon on a Shiso leaf. Photo by Holly Brooke.

AURA waterfront restaurant + patio(<http://www.aurarestaurant.ca>)

Executive Chef Ito presented a delicate and decadent torched yuzu miso salmon, on a kimuchi and smoked salmon brandade finished with a pork jowl and red pepper rouille on a Japanese shiso leaf. It tasted just as lovely as it looked. Bravo!



(<http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bluecrab-Seafood-House-Tacos.jpg?ff897b>)

Bluecrab Seafood House fresh crab tacos.

Photo by Holly Brooke.

Blue Crab Seafood House

(<http://www.bluecrab.ca>)

Prepared tasty fresh crab tacos with house coleslaw and home made hot sauce. One was just not enough!

Brentwood Bay Resort & Spa

(<http://www.brentwoodbayresort.com>)

The team at Brentwood Bay Resort was knocking it out of the park with their shrimp and soba noodle lettuce wrap: marinated hand-peeled shrimp, a light soba salad with basil, cilantro, miso aioli and cashews had many returning

for more.

The Butchart Gardens(<http://www.butchartgardens.com>)

“Go big or go home” must have been the motto for the Butchart Gardens as they introduced their newly created house-made signature gelato. Flavours included Lavender & Honey, Seasonal Wild Berry, Chocolate Hazelnut, and Salted Caramel Latte. Yum!

The Fairmont Empress

(<http://www.fairmont.com/empress-victoria/>)

Technical and skilled though always up for having fun, The Fairmont Empress team made cute mini corn dogs from house smoked Sloping Hill pork and rabbit topped with a pickled garlic scape aioli.



(http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Empress-corn-dogs.jpg?ff897b)

Fairmont Empress Hotel corndogs. Photo by Holly Brooke.

pecan tarts it was never ending deliciousness!

Sooke Harbour House(http://www.sookeharbourhouse.com)

Sooke Harbour House takes local to heart. They showcased a backyard style Barkley Sound salmon and smoked oyster chowder sea asparagus and hand harvested gooseneck barnacles. Wild and delicious!



(http://eatmagazine.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Butchart-Gardens-Ice-Cream.jpg?ff897b)

Butchart Gardens' house-made gelato. Photo by Holly Brooke

Jamie's Rainforest Inn

(http://www.tofinorainforestinn.com)



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Out of towners all the way from

Tofino, Jamie's Rainforest Inn plated mini line-caught, local wild salmon, cauliflower risotto croquettes with smoked tomato butter sauce.

oh sugar(http://www.ohsugar.ca)

Oh Sugar is right! This family run team stopped at nothing to wow the crowds. With maple bacon pecan brittle, maple bacon fudge, assorted toffees, maple bacon doughnuts and maple bacon

Taste Weekend Activities

The weekend followed up with events like *Sharpen Your Senses: An Interactive Tasting Workshop* at the The London Chef on Fort Street with winemaker, Michael Bartier, of Bartier Bros.

~ Sommelier and Regional Manager for Cascadia Liquor, Pamela Sanderson hosted *Bubbles! The Best of Vancouver Island*, a tasting of hand-picked sparkling wines for guests to explore.

~ The popular *Swine and the Vine* event was held at The Pacific Restaurant, Hotel Grand Pacific for the annual whole pig spit roast, paired with BC wines and cider.

~ Vista 18 West Coast Grill and Wine Bar hosted their "Band, Bubbles and Benny's" brunch accompanied with Jazz music and sparkling wines.

~ To conclude Taste's events, the grand finale dinner, *The Big Catch* was held at The Pacific Restaurant in the Hotel Grand Pacific for a long-table seafood boil and music.

Thanks for all the hard work and team effort to make Taste 2014 a fun-filled, weekend dedicated to BC's wine and food culture. If you had the pleasure of attending this year's event, here's to seeing you next year! If you didn't get a chance come out, be sure to scoop up your tickets for Taste 2016!

<http://www.victoriataste.com/>(http://www.victoriataste.com/)

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