

# W N E S

Compare Essex County with Napa Valley. Both have world class, award winning wines, created by experienced and talented vintners, using the flavourful fruit grown on lush estate wineries set in the beautiful countryside.

The only real difference between the two is Napa Valley has been aggressively marketed as a wine destination and Essex County, which established its first estate winery in the 1860s, has not.

Until now.

The cooperative spirit that has always prevailed among Southwestern Ontario winegrowers has led to sharing marketing strategies. Vintners who have pooled their viticulture expertise, along with their tractors, labour and encouragement, are now collectively promoting their region.

The Southwestern Ontario Vintners Association is comprised of Colio Estate Wines and Erie Shore Vineyard in Harrow, D'Angelo Estate Winery in Amherstburg, Sanson Estate Winery in McGregor, Pelee Island Winery in Kingsville and Pelee Island Pavilion on Pelee Island. New member wineries are opening in the region: Colchester Ridge Estate Winery, Muscadere Vineyards, Sprucewood Shores Estate Winery and Viewpointe Estate Winery in Harrow, with Mastronardi Estate Winery in Kingsville and Wagner Estate Winery in Maidstone.

The Association is committed to its collaborative approach to building a region. "As an industry we are showing leadership in promotion of this region as a destination and hope to encourage extending an invitation to others to 'Come for the Wine, Experience the Region,'" says Dennis Sanson of Sanson Estate Winery.

The local wineries are paving the way for more than a wine route; they are building a region as a destination of choice. Working with Windsor-based HarrisDouglas Strategic Marketing, SWOVA has developed a marketing strategy designed to entice potential visitors by exciting their senses. ▶

## here's to you

BY KAREN PATON-EVANS

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO VINTNERS ASSOCIATION RAISES A GLASS

A visitors map of the wine route, extending from Amherstburg to Ruthven and from McGregor to Colchester, beckons with SWOVA's new signature message: Come for the Wineries. Experience the Region.

Area vintners believe their region has an advantage in the distinct marketplace of Canada South to attract visitors from Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. Considering the awards and recognition which regional wines have garnered on a national and global scale, SWOVA is confident a tour of its wine region is well worth the trip.

By bringing more visitors to the area, SWOVA envisions spinoff business and revenue. "We recognize the challenge and are inspired by the opportunities in capturing the increase in value-added agricultural products and fostering the development of complementary industries like agri-food, accommodations and the food and beverage industry," says John Fancsy, president of Viewpointe Estate Winery and president of SWOVA.

While the winegrowers are preparing to spread the word, they are also busy preparing wines for their loyal customers and new guests.

Viewpointe Estate Winery, the newest kid on the block, has found support from friends in SWOVA. As partners and brothers John and Steve Fancsy, along with Steve's wife, Jean, establish their vineyards and winery, renowned vintner Sal D'Angelo provides technical advice. He also accepted an invitation to become Viewpointe's winemaker. "We share the same goal: to make the best wine possible," Sal says, "and producing the new winery's first vintages has been a thrilling process. Sal has made Viewpointe label wines available for sale through D'Angelo Estate Winery.

Sanson Winery recently introduced Viewpointe wines at its new vintage tasting event. Owner Dennis Sanson has also offered his culinary expertise to Viewpointe and is collaborating on the Viewpointe website, on which Dennis will share advice regarding pairing wine with food and other culinary considerations.

"Individually, each of us has unique talents, experience and resources," John Fancsy observes of SWOVA. Together, we can achieve tremendous things while lightening one another's load. WL