



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release:
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Port of Leonardtown Winery Opening Weekend May 21-23; First Wines "In Bottle"

All are invited to attend the official ribbon cutting (Toasting) of the Port of Leonardtown Winery on Friday, May 21 at 2 p.m. and enjoy the events planned during Winery Weekend—May 21-23. Entertainment by a Jazz Combo and tours of the winery will follow the 2 p.m. toasting.

The first outdoor concert of the Downtown Tunes season is scheduled for Sat, May 22 on the Historic Leonardtown Square. This free Jazz on the Square concert begins at 6 p.m. and features Gretchen Ritchie and Jazz Cabaret and Fractal Folk. After a dinner at one of Leonardtown's fine restaurants, bring a blanket and a bottle of wine from the Port of Leonardtown Winery to enjoy the concert. The Winery is currently open Wednesdays through Sundays from noon to 6 p.m.

A collaborative project led by the Southern Maryland Wine Growers Cooperative, the Winery is housed in a former State Highway Administration Building in Leonardtown on McIntosh Run off Rte. 5. The building, built in 1940, has been modified using mostly recycled materials to house the winery vats and a tasting room. The tasting room's bar features a restored bar from the former Pennie's Bar in Leonardtown.

The Cooperative members bottled their first wines in April. Much of the 2009 vintage is now in bottle and resting. Six wines were released in May and at least two additional wines will be added this Fall. The six wines now available include Vidal Blanc, a dry white varietal; Chardonnay, mostly unoaked; McIntosh Run, a semi-sweet apple wine; Breton Bay Breeze, a semi-sweet white blend; Breton Bay Shoals, a semi-sweet white red blend; and Autumn Frost, a lusciously sweet dessert-style wine from Vidal Blanc grapes.

The building was renovated and equipment was installed in 2009. The Board of County Commissioners and the Town of Leonardtown both funded the project, the Maryland Agricultural and Resources-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) provided a \$25,000 grant and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission granted the project \$65,000.

"This Winery represents an investment in our community's agricultural economy and will become a tourism destination," said Francis Jack Russell, President, Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County.

“And the Port of Leonardtown Winery will become the southern tip of the Patuxent Wine Trail that includes wineries in Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties and will promote tourism in our entire region,” added Mayor J. Harry Norris, Town of Leonardtown.

The Wine Growers Cooperative is proud of the new wines and the winery. “This winery is a result of much hard work and focus on quality,” said Caroline Baldwin, President, Wine Growers Cooperative. “Our members have sought out expert consultants and contributed many hours to produce our first production of wines and open the doors of the Port of Leonardtown Winery.”

The Winery supports Southern Maryland’s grape growers. By purchasing locally grown grapes, the winery provides an economic incentive for farmers to continue using their land for agriculture.

The Port of Leonardtown Winery features a tasting room, picnic area and is located near shopping, restaurants, canoe/kayak launch and a wildlife sanctuary. The Winery will be open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 6 pm. It will also be open until 9 p.m. on the first Friday of each month during Leonardtown’s First Friday events.

Contact the Wine Growers Cooperative at www.portofleonardtown.com or visit their blog at <http://portofleonardtownwinery.blogspot.com/> for more information.

Photos are available upon request

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