Hermit Woods

Wine Club Release
Fall 2020

Dear Club Members,

As always, Ken, Chuck, and I are pleased to be releasing our Fall club and sharing with you our latest collection of fine wines handcrafted for you in the past two years. Wine club releases are always a special time for us, giving us yet another opportunity to see many of you and share our experience with you.

This release is particularly noteworthy. The pandemic has severely impacted people and businesses around the globe, and Hermit Woods is no exception. We cannot begin to express how much we have appreciated all your support as you have stood by us during this challenging year.

Along with our detailed descriptions of our wines, we have shared some of the struggles and highlights of this past year in our club book story. Although this has been a challenging year, there have been and continue to be some exciting developments as our little company grows.

We hope you enjoy your Fall selection. We also hope that you and your family remain safe and healthy and we look forward to seeing you on your next visit to the winery.

Sincerely,

Bob, Chuck, and Ken

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2019 Heirloom Crabapple

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 700 Cases Produced - 12.7 Alc By Vol.

A Story in Every Bottle

We discovered the delightful "Dolgo" crabapple years ago when I took a bite of one of the little red apples growing on a tree in Bob's front yard. The resulting experimental wine was outstanding, and it has quickly become our signature wine. Further research revealed that the Dolgo crabapple was brought to this country from Kazakhstan in the 1800s to add flavor to the cider being made at the time. Our biggest problem now is sourcing enough of these apples to make more of this very popular wine. Fortunately, harvest in 2019 was a bumper crop, so we have plenty of this vintage!

Wine Notes

Produced from Dolgo crabapples and wild, low-bush blueberries. Bright, fresh apple aromas precede a lively, mouth-watering, cranberry-like and apple flavored tang; reminiscent of a cranberry rosé.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy this wine at all occasions, and with many different foods. This wine pairs well with just about any food and especially well with roast turkey (Thanksgiving!) or chicken.

Farmers Notes

Three farms - Allison's Orchard, Saxton, and Stone Mtn - supplied us with Dolgo crabapples for this vintage. These farms grow a wide variety of heirloom apples and other fruit, and follow best management practices ensuring the highest quality fruit. Chuck, our partner, has developed a close relationship with the orchard managers over the years and enjoys the time of harvest. Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness.

Vinification

The fresh crabapples are crushed and added to the right amount of water and sugar in both of our 1500 gallon "super tanks" used as fermentation vessels. Blueberries are added directly to the fermenters. Then, Lalvin D21 wine yeast is added for primary fermentation at a peak temperature of 73F. The wine is then aged in stainless steel tanks, with light toast, French oak staves suspended in the wine for 5 months, allowing for extraction of wood tannins and flavor, all while enhancing the structure. Afterwards, the wine is stabilized and filtered for a brilliant sparkle and a small amount of sugar is added for drinking balance.

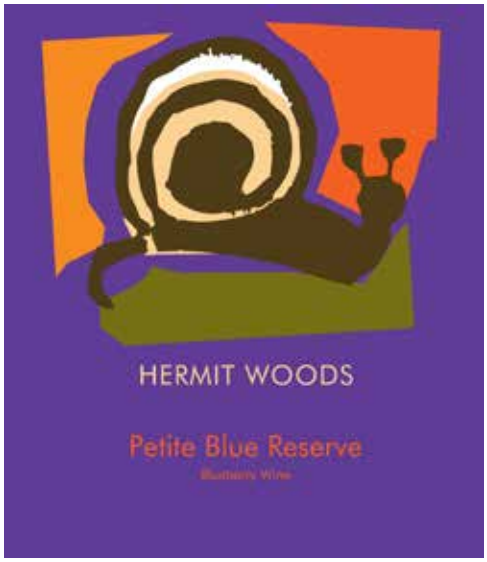
pH 3.27 RS 3.25% ABV 12.7%

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2019 Petite Blue Reserve

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 217 Cases Produced - 12.7 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

Years before the winery started, Chuck, Bob and I - as well as a small group of friends we hung out with - would meet on a monthly basis to taste wine. At one particular evening of wine tasting, Bob brought out a bottle in a brown bag and shared it, and asked us what type of wine it was (other than red - ha!). All of us enjoyed it. Some thought it was a pinot noir, but none of us could guess that it was actually, against all odds, a dry blueberry wine! The next day, Chuck and his wife picked a whole bucket of fresh blueberries and showed up on my doorstep with them, requesting that I make wine like what we had the night before. Since then, I have been making dry blueberry wines every season, and the result - our famous "Petite Blue" and "Reserve" - have become some of our most sought-after wines. In fact, in the 2017 November edition of Food and Wine Magazine, Petite Blue was identified as THE craft beverage for the State of New Hampshire, beating out all beers, spirits and wines produced in the state.

Wine Notes

Petite Blue Reserve is reminiscent of some pinot noirs, perhaps a little drier and richer than many, with aromas and flavors that differ from grape wines because this wine is crafted entirely from wild, low-bush blueberries.

Pairing Suggestions

We have found Petite Blue Reserve to pair very well with a wide variety of foods, such as savory quiche, stuffed mushrooms, pepper chèvre, and herbed pork or chicken dishes. The wine is also delightful on its own!

Farmers Notes

Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. Our blueberries are the wild berries that grow close to the ground across much of Downeast Maine; the smaller berries provide us with a concentrated flavor and higher skin-to-juice ratio which give our wines the soft tannins we enjoy.

Vinification

To bring forth the fresh bright blueberry aromas and flavors married with deep richness and oak spice, a number of important steps are taken during the vinification and elevage of this wine. Fermentation occurred in our two supertanks with pumpovers for maximum extraction of fruit flavors and tannins. A special yeast strain from the Cornas area of the Rhone valley in France is used for its ability to showcase the fruit. A small portion is fermented directly in a French Oak wine barrel which has been turned upright and used as a fermenter. Pressing off took place at three separate times for complexity. These fractions are then combined and aged in French Oak barrels for 7 months where they go through secondary malolactic fermentation. The wine is unfiltered.

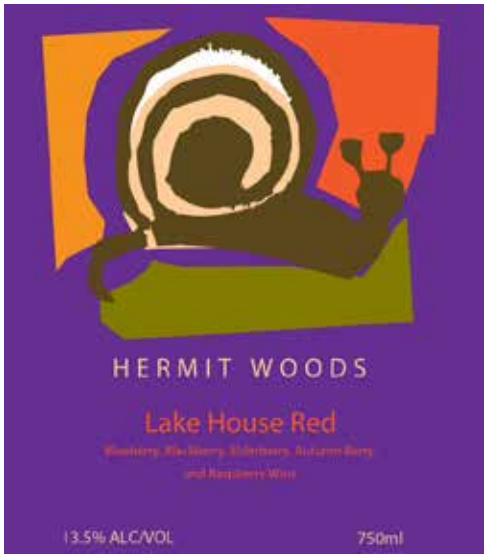
pH 3.34 RS 0% ABV 12.7

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2018 Lake House Red

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 160 Cases Produced - 13.3 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

Inspired from the wine called Red Scare, this is an attempt to make a wine that drinks like a Burgundy. Of course, in Hermit style, this wine has its own unique characteristics because it is not made with grapes, but rather with the briar and dark berries prevalent in New England. Unlike the Red Scare, to focus attention on the true flavors of the berries, no honey is used in this wine. French oak barrel aging is integrated into the elevage of the wine to lift and showcase the dark berry notes and add old world aromatics and some smokiness.

Wine Notes

This wine is a full bodied, dry red wine bursting with dark berry aromas and flavors, soft tannins, smoke, spice and fresh acidity.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy this with medium weight meat and cheese dishes, such as pork or lamb.

Farmers Notes

Our blackberries are from a more local source than in the past: a grower in New Jersey. The elderberries came from an organic grower in Arkansas at Dixieland Farm. The red raspberries are from an organic source in Oregon. Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries, a three generation family blueberry harvester in Ellsworth, Maine. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. Our blueberries are the wild berries that grow close to the ground across much of Downeast Maine; the smaller berries provide us with a concentrated flavor and higher skin-to-juice ratio which give our wines the soft tannins we enjoy.

Vinification

The frozen fruits are added to the right amount of water in three fermentation vessels and undergo an extended cold soak maceration under inert gas to extract color and fruit character. Then Lalvin BM45, RA17, and BRG wine yeasts are added for primary fermentations of 8 days at maximum temperatures of about 73F. Soon after press, the wine is racked to French Oak wine barrels for elevage, providing early micro-oxidation and development of good structure. After 18 months in barrels, the wine is racked to a stainless container in preparation for bottling unfiltered.

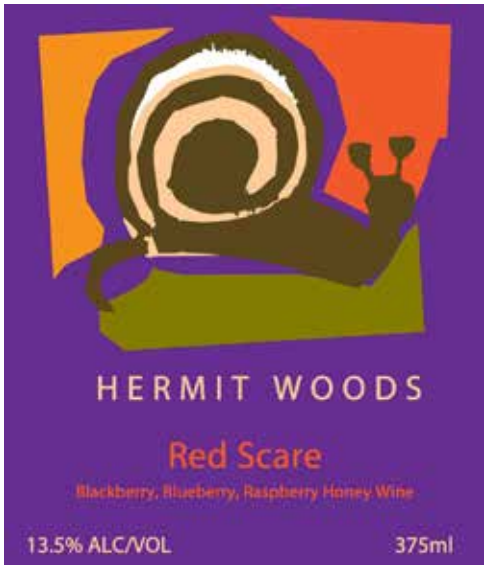
pH 3.64 RS 0% ABV 13.3

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2018 Red Scare

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 196 Cases Produced - 13.5 Alc By Vol.



A Story in Every Bottle

Fine Pinot Noir from Burgundy is one of my favorite wine types. I love the bright, fresh, dark berry aromatics, the delicate and bold mouth-filling flavors, and the soft, long finish. Red Scare approaches some of those characteristics, but with its own unique flavors. The name "Red Scare" came from a frisbee team that my son, Max, played on during his freshman year in college (2008) - that same Fall season, I made a batch of wine from the dark berries growing in my yard, as well as honey from the beehives my son and I had set up in our backyard. I have made it nearly every year since then, and when Max graduated, I gave him a bottle from each year he was in college: vintages from 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011...rumor has it that some bottles from those years still exist.

Wine Notes

This is a multi-berry "melomel" (fruit mead) made from whole, wild blueberries, organic blackberries and black raspberries, and local, raw, unfiltered honey in proportions to provide balance, structure, and long-deep flavors. This is a complex wine with great aging potential. Fresh berry aromas and flavors over a medium-weight, honeyed wine with a long, soft, dry finish...a hint of oak plays in the background.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy on its own, or with light meats, most notably pork.

Farmers Notes

Our blackberries are from a more local source than in the past: a grower in New Jersey. Our black raspberries are shipped from organic farmers in the Willamette Valley, Oregon. Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. The honey used for this wine is provided to us by a local NH apiary. We source only raw, unprocessed honey, straight from the hive and into our fermentation procedure. We also used a small amount of sugar as part of the fermentables instead of all honey, so that the wine could achieve the desired level of alcohol without having too many overpowering honey notes.

Vinification

All the berries are combined with a portion of the honey and a small amount of water, undergo an extended "cold-soak maceration" for greater aroma, fruit, and tannin extraction. A special yeast strain from the Cornas area of the Rhone valley in France is used for primary fermentation and is known for its ability to showcase the fruit. Following alcoholic fermentation, much of the wine aged in French Oak barrels for 17 months and underwent partial malolactic fermentation, with a remainder in a stainless steel tank. These are blended prior to bottling unfiltered. This approach is used for some Provence Reds, resulting in a wine with great complexity.

pH 3.53 RS 0% ABV 13.

Hermit Woods

WINE TECH NOTES

2019 Deep Blue

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 67 Cases Produced - 18 Alc By Vol.

A Story in Every Bottle

Many years ago, while researching historic cider making in New England, I came across the description of 'apple jack.' This is a hard cider concentrated by freezing: put 6% ABV hard cider into a barrel, leave it outside during the freezing month of January, and a thick layer of ice forms on the inside of the barrel, concentrating the alcohol and flavor. Reading this, I decided to 'jack' our Petite Blue blueberry wine. The result was a highly concentrated, higher alcohol, intense and very delicious blueberry wine with port-like characteristics. Unfortunately, we were not legally able to commercially produce a wine this way because this is a cryogenic distillation process, not strictly a fermentation. Fortunately, we realized that instead of adding water to make Petite Blue and then removing it by freezing, we can make Deep Blue, legally, by not adding any water. To increase the alcohol, sugar is added during fermentation and is converted by the yeast. The result is similar (and legal for our winery to produce!).

Wine Notes

A fruit forward, ruby port-like wine with deep rich flavors and engaging aromas. Drink 2020-2030.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy lightly chilled with dessert, such as chocolate, cheesecake, or blueberry pie with vanilla ice cream.

Farmers Notes

Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family wild blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure we use only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness. Our blueberries are the wild berries that grow close to the ground across much of Downeast Maine; the smaller berries provide us with a concentrated flavor and higher skin-to-juice ratio which give our wines the soft tannins we enjoy.

Vinification

To preserve flavor, the little wild blueberries are carefully cleaned and then deep frozen at the Merrill Facility. So when we receive them, they need to thaw, which results in a nice slow cold extraction of the fruit flavors and nutrients. In fact, many grape wines start by cooling the fresh grapes so that they can go through such a 'cold soak' prior to fermentation for better fruit flavors. Once fully thawed, Lalvin D254 yeast is used to ferment the berries, as well as added sugar for greater alcohol. This wine is not filtered.

pH 3.22 RS 3.25% ABV 17.7

Hermit Woods

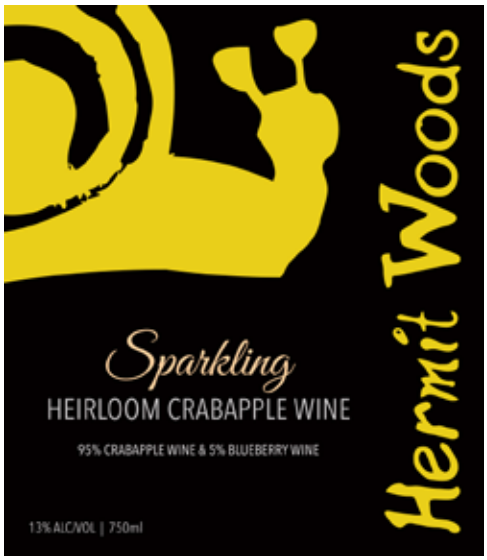
WINE TECH NOTES

2019 Sparkling Heirloom Crabapple

Winemaker: Ken Hardcastle | 180 Cases Produced - 12.7 Alc By Vol.

A Story in Every Bottle

We discovered the delightful "Dolgo" crabapple years ago when I took a bite of one of the little red apples growing on a tree in Bob's front yard. The resulting experimental wine was outstanding, and it has quickly become our signature wine. Further research revealed that the Dolgo crabapple was brought to this country from Kazakhstan in the 1800s to add flavor to the cider being made at the time. Our biggest problem now is sourcing enough of these apples to make more of this very popular wine. Fortunately, harvest in 2019 was a bumper crop, so we have plenty of this vintage! This is the same wine in our DOLGO cans released in early summer this year.



Wine Notes

Produced from Dolgo crabapples and wild, low-bush blueberries. Bright, fresh apple aromas precede a lively, mouth-watering, cranberry-like and apple flavored tang; reminiscent of a cranberry rosé.

Pairing Suggestions

Enjoy this wine at all occasions, and with many different foods. This wine pairs well with just about any food and especially well with roast turkey (Thanksgiving!) or chicken. A bottle of bubbly is great with any festive event.

Farmers Notes

Three farms - Allison's Orchard, Saxton, and Stone Mtn - supplied us with Dolgo crabapples for this vintage. These farms grow a wide variety of heirloom apples and other fruit, and follow best management practices ensuring the highest quality fruit. Chuck, our partner, has developed a close relationship with the orchard managers over the years and enjoys the time of harvest. Our blueberries come from Merrill's Wild Blueberries in Ellsworth, Maine; a three generation family blueberry harvester. Todd Merrill works closely with us to ensure only the finest quality berries, harvested at maximum ripeness.

Vinification

The fresh crabapples are crushed and added to the right amount of water and sugar in both of our 1500 gallon "super tanks" used as fermentation vessels. Blueberries are added directly to the fermenters. Then, Lalvin D21 wine yeast is added for primary fermentation at a peak temperature of 73F. The wine is then aged in stainless steel tanks, with light toast, French oak staves suspended in the wine for 5 months, allowing for extraction of wood tannins and flavor, all while enhancing the structure. Afterwards, the wine is stabilized and filtered for a brilliant sparkle and a small amount of sugar is added for drinking balance. We then force carbonated in our brite tank.

pH 3.27 RS 3.75% ABV 12.7%

HERMIT WOODS

2020 - BOTH CHALLENGING AND EXCITING

Off to a great start

I don't think the challenges that have befallen us this year need explaining to anyone. It has been a challenging year in many ways for everyone. We want to take a moment to reflect.

We started 2020 off with one of the most exciting, adventuresome, and educational experiences Ken, Chuck, and I have had together since founding Hermit Woods in 2010. We got to spend two weeks discovering the South African wine country (as told in our Spring Club Release Book). We returned from that journey reinvigorated and eager to share our story and apply our new knowledge to our wines and wine experience. Not to mention,

begin planning a return trip with you in 2021.

Shortly after returning from South Africa, the three of us headed off to Lancaster, Pennsylvania for our annual sojourn to the Eastern Winery Exposition, the largest wine industry conference east of the

Mississippi. As always, the time together with our colleagues, industry leaders in wine, wine equipment, and winemaking supplies is invaluable to our journey together.

It is at this conference in early March that things began to change for 2020. Upon arriving at the expo, there was a rapidly growing sense of concern for a global pandemic that was starting to spread quickly across the country. We went from our typical annual greetings of hugs and handshakes to fist pumps and elbow taps as the conference continued, and fears grew.

We returned from the conference on Friday, March 13 (of all days), to spend an evening in NY City before returning to NH. Having not yet fully grasped what was happening, we went out on the town for dinner at a famous Jazz Club, Smoke (in hindsight, probably foolishly). We did, however, have a fantastic experience enjoying the sounds of Ron Carter on the last night of our sojourn together before things got crazy.

Upon returning home to the winery, it became abundantly clear that our lives and the lives of most Americans were going to be changing in profound ways over the next few days. On Tuesday morning, March 17, we made one of the most difficult decisions we have had to make concerning our business. For the first time since we started our business, we would be closing our doors with no foreseeable reopening insight. Our futures, along with you and millions of Americans, were unknowable.

The hardest part of the decision to close the winery was having to furlough our entire team. We knew we would be inviting them back in what we had hoped would be a short time. Nonetheless, all our futures remained unclear, and parting ways with people we had come to know and care about was difficult, to say the least.

First few days and weeks

The first few days and weeks of our closure

were confusing and encouraging at the same time. We were all operating in uncharted territory. It felt as though we had abandoned ship in the middle of the ocean and were treading water to survive. Not meaning to sound too dramatic, but we had invested ten years of our lives and life's savings into Hermit Woods, and its future was now in question.

To add to the challenges of the first few days after closing, we learned that Chuck and his girlfriend, who lives in NY City, both came down with COVID-19. With Bonnie residing in the heart of one of the US's hot spots, and Chuck, a pilot traveling back and forth from Europe, they were both at extremely high risk of contracting the disease. The two of them sequestered at Chuck's home in Tilton, where they remained for over thirty days, with Maya and Ken making food runs for them. They were completely isolated in their recovery, except for a trip to the hospital for treatment. I am pleased to say that both Chuck and Bonnie have made full recoveries with the possible exception of some minor lingering aftereffects.

On the upside, we immediately began to re-imagine our winery's future. Within days of our closure, we instituted curbside pickup and eliminated shipping costs for six or more wine bottles. We created a program of virtual tastings, discussions, and interviews via Zoom and Facebook live. We stepped up our conversations with our wholesale vendors to make our wine more widely available now that our tasting room and deli were closed.

With these efforts, and thanks to you and our loyal customers, we began to see that not all was lost. With multiple trips to the winery every day to meet many of you at the curb with wine in hand and to package bottles up to be shipped, we began to see how our future might unfold. We would get through this.

Our tasting room remained closed for nearly three months. Our accountant and bookkeeper worked tirelessly on our behalf, ensuring we could access the relief funds we would require to get through these challenging times. Meredith Village Savings Bank and Belknap Economic Development did all they could to support our financial needs and see us through to the other side.

Most importantly, you, our club members and customers and friends stood by us in the darkest of times. We kept in touch with you in every way we knew how. From Zoom to social media, on the phone, and in-person in front of the winery. Your warmth and kindness, along with your support through your kind words and purchase of our wine, made it possible for us to get through this challenging period, and we can't thank you enough.

We reopened our tasting room in a modified way on June 6, with most of our team returning to work. With the financial support afforded them through unemployment and government assistance, they were healthy, financially stable, and eager to return. So we began a new chapter.

Since reopening, you, our loyal customers, and many new faces have come out to support us and help bring our winery back to life. However, things were not as they were before the pandemic. With all tours and regular tastings discontinued, we have adjusted to a new way of interacting and delivering our service to you. Yet even with limited seating inside, expanded seating on our lawn, facemasks and sneeze shields, things have amazingly started to feel somewhat normal again.

It remains unclear how long these changes will be in effect, and some will likely become the new norm. One thing is clear - we intend to be here for you through it all and on into a future yet to be discovered.

New construction

One of the silver linings that came with our closure was that construction began on our third floor. Although we had intended to remain open during construction, it quickly became apparent that it would have been extremely challenging, if not impossible, given the project's magnitude. Closing the winery paved the way for our builder, K. A. Clason Fine Woodworking, to tear (literally)

into the project unabated. Without restrictions that might have been in place had we been open, the project moved along in ways otherwise impossible.

HERMIT WOODS 2020 - BOTH CHALLENGING AND EXCITING

We remodeled our deli in anticipation of increased demand with as many as sixty-five new seats on the third floor. Again, something we could not have completed had we been open.

Although some of the side-effects of the pandemic have resulted in unexpected delays in construction, causing our project to linger on into the late fall or later, we look forward to sharing our new space with you soon. We hope to see it finished by sometime in November or early December.

When the project is complete, we will once again resume wine tastings. The additional space afforded us by opening the third floor will allow us to safely socially distance our guests over 1,500 square feet of bright, airy space with thirteen-foot ceilings. As many as 35 people can join us at a time for an enhanced tasting and educational experience, including premium glassware suited to the different styles of wine being sampled, visuals provided by our projection system, and a tasting experience like none other. And yes, club members and a guest will still enjoy this enhanced experience complimentarily.

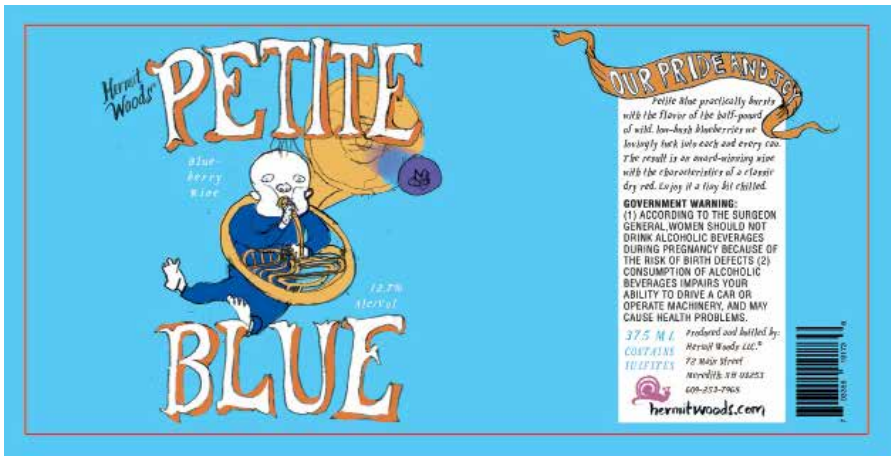
Also included in this new space will be increased seating for our deli, event and meeting space available for your private use, and ultimately a listening room, the real motivation behind our expansion. Once the pandemic is over, we look forward to bringing you music from around the world to be enjoyed with a glass of wine and a light bite in our intimate new setting, the "Loft at Hermit Woods." Performances will occur at least once a week, year-round. We hope to make the Loft at Hermit Woods one of the premier music venues in New England.

In addition to the expansion to our third floor, we are also excited to include a ramp, making our tasting room more accessible. Furthermore, we have the approval to convert our front lawn into a patio that will accommodate 24 new outdoor seats.

Other significant developments this year

This year is also the year Hermit Woods invested in canning. For the first time, on June 12, with the help of Iron Heart Canning Co., we put one of our wines, Sparkling Heirloom Crabapple, and one of our ciders, Hard Cranberry Apple Cider, into cans.

Our initial offerings were intended to test the interest in canned products and they have proven very successful. So much so that we have already begun planning our second canning for this fall, when we will be offering our Sparkling Winnipesaukee Rosé and our Petite Blue in cans.



We have been working with Deb Lucke, illustrator, author, and designer of our bottled cider labels to design all of our new can labels. We are always delighted with the new designs and fun concepts that Deb brings to our products.

Look for our cans in stores around the Lakes Region and beyond. We are also in the Common Man Roadside Stores in Manchester, Plymouth, and the north and southbound rest stops on I-93. We also hope to offer our cans in the state liquor stores throughout NH soon. Locally, you can enjoy our Cranberry Apple Cider at Twin Barns Brewing in Meredith (you can enjoy their beer in our deli).

In Conclusion

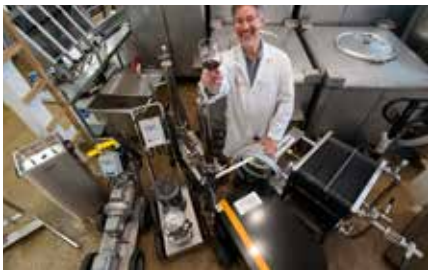
As the title of this story states, this has been both a challenging and exciting year for us at Hermit Woods Winery & Deli. After ten years of putting everything we have into building Hermit Woods, we were forced to close our doors for three months. We had to lay off our incredible and loyal team and find new ways to stay in touch with you, our club members and customers. We have had to rethink how we do everything and develop new ways to serve you across all our business functions.

Our partner Chuck and his girlfriend suffered for weeks fighting COVID-19, along with millions of Americans and hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Many of them lost their lives as a result. People around the globe have suffered both directly and indirectly in ways we could never have imagined. Businesses, both large and small, have had to fight for their very existence, many of which have not made it as a result.

Through this experience, we have learned many lessons. The most important is that, with your support, Hermit Woods is resilient and able to adapt as needed to stay healthy and continue our dream. We have developed better ways of doing things, many of which will be with us well past the pandemic. We have built a better and stronger winery with new, safer, and smarter ways to serve you and ultimately provide you an even better experience.

However, no matter how hard we work, or how good our wines are, it would all be for nothing without you, our club members, customers, and Friends. You are the energy that drives us to work harder, make better wine, and keep our doors open. Without you, Hermit Woods would not be here today. We look forward to seeing your smiling faces every day, sharing our wine and stories with you, and making our experience together all that much more enjoyable. We can't thank you enough.

HERMIT WOODS 2020 - BOTH CHALLENGING AND EXCITING

We also want to thank our wives, Jerilyn Dolan and Maya Hardcastle; and our current team, Merike Youngs, Elise Brilis, Assistant Winemaker Melaney Shepard, Stephanie Burke, our new Chef, Debra Urquhart, Kamila Hecka, and Catherine Moeller. Also, some of our recent team members who helped see us through these challenging times and have since moved on; Nate Klock, Allyson McKenna, Kirsten Wilkinson, Noa Lin, and Shaylah Kelly. And our accounting team, Steve Geer and Jenn Goyette. We would also like to thank our builder, K. A. Clason - Fine Woodworking; our bank, Meredith Village Savings Bank; and Belknap County Economic Development Council. We thank the town and people of Meredith for their continued support and the Greater Meredith Program for helping make Meredith the wonderful place it is. We would also like to thank the Liquor Commission and all our vendors and suppliers.

Together, we will survive 2020. Together we will build a better winery, a better town, and a better place to live. We wish everyone good health. Stay safe, and we look forward to seeing you in the winery soon.