



Kreutz Creek tries BYO with a twist – bring the food, not the bottle

Faced with the expense and difficulty of acquiring an alcoholic beverage license in Pennsylvania, many Chester County restaurants aggressively promoted BYOB — “Bring Your Own Bottle” — which benefits both the eateries and the customers.

A need to draw customers into its new tastingroom in downtown West Chester led KreutzCreek winery to come up with its own clever invention — BYOF, or “Bring Your Own Food.” Although sales of local Pennsylvania wines have been brisk as the region grows in both output and quality, only Va La sells exclusively through its winery tasting room. The rest have satellite sales and tasting rooms not connected directly to the winery, and a couple of the wineries also use the cumbersome and low-margin Pennsylvania state store system. As with all retail sales, the places with the most traffic also have the highest rent. So it’s important to get a profitable return on the real estate investment as soon as possible.

Carole Kirkpatrick, who owns Kreutz Creek Vineyards in West Grove with winemaker husband Jim, thought a BYOF was a natural way to get people into their West Chester shop, at 44 E. Gay St.

“We opened last September,” Kirkpatrick says. “At first people felt a little funny bringing in food. But gradually, what we were doing quickly got around by word of mouth.” She says the tasting room will accommodate about 40 people seated.

The store, open Tuesdays through Saturdays, can sell customers wine three ways — as part of a set tasting, by the glass, or by the bottle. There are locally produced red, white, and dessert wines. Customers who don’t bring their own food can order from local restaurants that deliver.

“Peter Gilmore of Gilmore’s restaurant stopped by the first day we opened and said ‘Let’s work together,’” Kirkpatrick says. “I see people in here with Wawa salads and takeout from Limoncello and pizza places.” She keeps menus in the shop for those who want to place orders.

“We get more BYOF customers after work or for dinner than we do for lunch, although some come in then, too,” Kirkpatrick says. “During weekends, I would say that 70 percent of our customers come with food or order it.” Friday and Saturday evenings have the additional draw of live music.

So when the Kirkpatricks of Kreutz Creek tell you, “Our wines really go with food,” you have the chance to check them out on the spot.

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