

## Muse Winery and Bistro A bit of heaven on the Saanich Peninsula

By Ron Kirstein, Edited by Linda Kirstein



A view into the Muse Vineyard from the patio  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

It is late Friday morning and my wife Linda and I look forward to a country drive to Deep Cove on the Saanich Peninsula, some 25 minutes north of downtown Victoria. We drive along scenic Highway 17 north past Sidney where we take the Wain Road turnoff and follow the wine signs. Soon we are driving down Tatlow Road, arriving at the Deep Cove Chalet, where we spot the ocean and vineyards. A left turn takes us to the Muse Winery and Bistro. Instantly we know we are in a very special place. We are greeted in the parking lot by the affable Peter Ellmann, who with his wife Jane, are living their dream. Peter takes us into the tasting room where he introduces us to the charismatic Darby McDonald, who with her partner, Chef Samantha Wiger, owns and operates Taste of Life Catering. Together, they provide the food services at the Bistro Muse. We briefly meet Samantha and discover she is a graduate from Northwest Culinary Academy of Vancouver. She quickly disappears to tend to the food preparation. Darby seats us in a shady spot right next to the vineyard. What a charming setting! Darby does a superb job of explaining the food options and recommends a number of wines. She is proud to announce that the Muse Winery 2008 Pinot Gris brought home the gold medal at the All Canadian Wine Championships. Darby is a Level 2 Sommelier and has first-hand knowledge of the Muse wine selections. She gives us excellent recommendations and it is clear that Darby's goal is to ensure that we have an unforgettable experience.



**Darby McEDonald at the tasting bar**  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



**Linda seated for lunch on the Bistro Patio**  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

While poking around the Muse, we meet Faith and True, two of the Ellmann family. These friendly four-legged pals are Australian Shepherds. Jane Ellmann tells us they are essential to keep the many deer and racoons from damaging the vineyard. In a minute, it was clear that Jane was 'prairie people'. Her friendliness gives her away. We discover that she was raised only blocks away from Linda's parent's home in Edmonton. Jane tells us that both she and Peter have worked in the hospitality industry - Jane with the Marriott Hotel chain and Peter as a wild game and wine broker - until they moved to Edmonton in 2002 to help with Jane's parent's business. They quickly learned that this was not following their dream, so they started a search for a winery. When they arrived in Victoria to check out the Chalet Estate Winery, they knew coming down the hill on Tatlow Road that they had arrived. It is clear that they know what they want and they are indeed following their dream.



**Great Food and Superior Presentation at the Muse Bistro**



**Take home a piece of BC from the gift shop**

Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein & Muse Winery

Photo by Ron Kirstein

Our lunches arrive and the presentation is spectacular, so we quickly take some photos and then dig into these culinary delights. Each bite brings a new burst of flavour. The Bistro Muse bills itself as an intimate alfresco open-air dining patio. The weather is warm, the sky is pure blue, and we are nestled right against the vineyard. We have great food on our plates and fine wine in our glasses – it seems more like heaven. The Muse Bistro has an indoor dining space as well but on a day like this the patio is perfect. As we enjoy our incredible lunch, the flow of guests is steady. Many take a seat for lunch and some just stop for a wine tasting. Five dollars for five wines at the tasting bar is a bargain. We share a couple of tasting plates to get a good feel for what is available at the Bistro. One is a selection of local cheeses and meats, including Little Qualicum Spice Cheese, Rosenborg Bleu Cheese with Pear, Pinot Gris Salami, a very tender house Prosciutto, Comox Valley Brie and Elk Salami. A basket of artisan breads and two delicious compotes accompany this meal. The other plate, The Muse Trio, has three fabulous tarts - a layered candied salmon tart with mascarpone cheese and lemon zest, a caramelized onion tart with gorgonzola and thyme drizzled with balsamic vinegar glaze, and the final of this trio, a spectacular dark chocolate ganache tart with raspberry coulis. (See above)

The menu has lots of choice and each week the soup, salad and sandwich change to tantalize your palate.



Linda checking out the gift shop and wine selection  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



Inside the Muse Bistro  
Photo Courtesy of Muse Bistro

Inside the Muse, we find a spacious wine tasting counter, a great display of wines available for sale, and a specialty gift shop. There is indoor seating should you arrive during inclement weather.

We notice a telescope trained on a bald-eagle nest. The nest has a young eagle in it flexing its wings getting ready to leave home. The parent eagles will be back to lay more eggs next year.

Like the eagles, we decide that we will be back again and again. What a great place to bring out-of-

town guests for a truly West Coast experience.



Telescope aimed at the eagle nest  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



A young eagle tests his wings before leaving home  
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

**CHECK OUT THE MUSE WINERY**