

## BLOG: LABELLE WINERY TOUR

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By GSA Tim Adams, Southern NH University Class of 2014

This past month I had the pleasure of joining in with many other GSA's as we got a tour of the LaBelle Winery in Amherst New Hampshire.

While I had driven past the winery several times on the past, I had never taken the time to stop in and walk about. This was mainly because I'm not really a wine drinker. I do have a glass now and then but it isn't my first choice.

The tour guide, Pam, started us off with a tasting of LaBelle's Dry Pear wine. As we sampled this wine, she told us a bit about it and the owners of the winery. We walked through the large banquet room where they host weddings and large dinner groups.

Our second sample of wine was named Gewürztraminer. Please don't ask me to pronounce it. Like the first, it had a pleasant taste, even for me.

This was followed up by a Cranberry Riesling. While many people in the group really raved about how good this wine was, for me it was just the opposite. For some reason the flavor didn't suit me at all, but then, as I've mentioned, I'm not really a wine drinker. It certainly wasn't as bad as some wines I've had in the past but both go the previous samples, to me anyway were better.

Our fourth sample was a Dry Blueberry. To me, Blueberries belong in Pies, not wine, but the wine was enjoyable. At the end of the day even, this was my favorite of the five we tasted.

The tour by this time had finished with the upstairs and had move into the winery itself. We passed a truck that was delivering wine juice from upstate New York. While LaBelle Winery has a couple thousand grape plants, they don't produce nearly enough product to meet the needs of the winery itself. They do have more property that they could plant but are leaving that land as is.

Our fifth sample was the LaBelle Rosé. Again a nice flavorful wine that most people, whose comments I heard seemed to like also.

We had a look at the bottling process which is a bit more involved that what I helped my parents with when they tried a making some wine years ago. You start with getting the bottles into a single row on the conveyor, the bottle is then inverted and washed with fresh water, drained, and then dried with a puff of air. The bottle is then turned right side up and an injection of nitrogen is inserted to remove the oxygen that could affect the taste of the wine.

At this point the bottle is filled with wine, the bottle is checked to verify all of them contain the proper amount then a vacuum is drawn in the bottle and a cork is inserted. the bottle then proceeds through a couple of more steps and finally a table is applied.

While that all sounds like a lot of work, it's handled by one continuous conveyor with minimum people involvement. Yes, they do have people monitoring the process, but most of the work is done by the machine.

We then proceeded outside and walked down into one of the fields with the grape plants. An outside (weather permitting) wedding area was pointed out to us, as well as several Bee hives that sat along side of the property.

At this point, Pam turned us loose and many of us returned to the restaurant for lunch.

While LaBelle Winery has been a fixture in Amherst since 2008, the current facility opened in October of 2012. Amy, the owner, got her start earlier than that at Alyson's Orchard over in Walpole NH.

A few of the pictures I took can be seen at

<https://labellewinery.shutterfly.com>

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