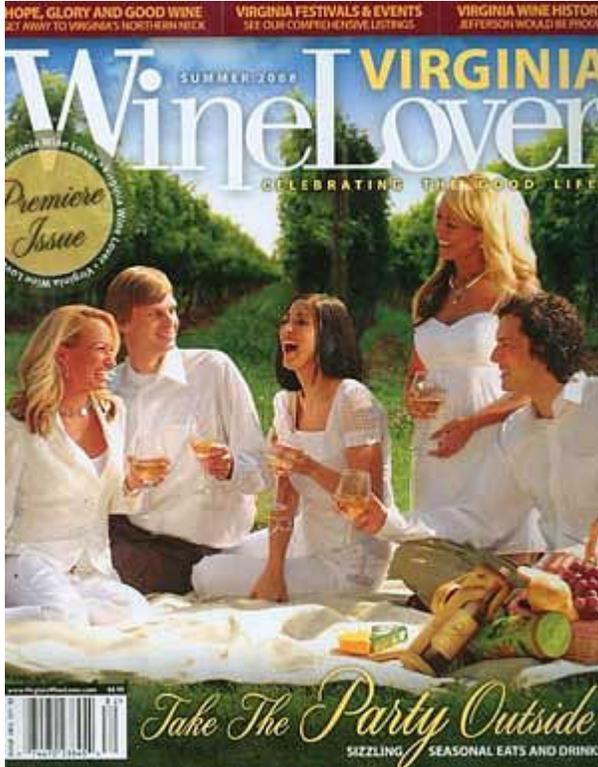


# Lynchburg man sees big future in Virginia wine



Above: Cover of Virginia Wine Lover magazine's first issue

By [BRYAN GENTRY](#)

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Virginia is becoming a more popular stop for wine lovers, with wineries playing an increasingly important role in the Commonwealth's tourism industry.

Frank Britt is trying to make sure that trend continues.

The Lynchburg man teamed up with a graphic design firm in Virginia Beach to launch a lifestyle magazine that promotes wine made in Virginia.

The first issue of Virginia Wine Lover rolled off the presses this spring. Its 80 pages are full of photos and lists of subscribers, and is available in the wine sections of some grocery stores.

Britt — a wine lover himself — first thought of starting the magazine while visiting the Virginia Wine and Garlic Festival at Rebec Vineyards in Amherst County about five years ago.

“I saw thousands of people there,” Britt said. “I said, ‘What the hell are these people doing here?’”

He pulled one visitor aside and asked, “How did you hear about this?”

“He said, ‘I was reading the Washington Post last Sunday, and the Garlic Festival was written up in it.’”

Britt's brain started ticking. The owner of a Lynchburg-based marketing company, he thought there might be room for more promotion of Virginia's wines.

“The power of the press brought people to this,” he said. “We need more people to know about this, and we need it on a more regular basis.”

Several years ago Britt started an e-mail newsletter to spread the word about events and products related to wine. That newsletter now has more than 15,000 subscribers, he said.

Vista Graphics, a publishing and graphic design firm in Virginia Beach, signed on to help produce a print version.

The advertisers fall into a number of categories. Many are wineries and wine-centered restaurants. But they also include B&Bs, a regional jeweler, a major Southeastern bank, and a real estate agent at Smith Mountain Lake.

In the columns, there are detailed lists of winery events and recipes. The first edition featured a range of articles about the history of Virginia winemaking and environmental practices used by vineyards.

Britt said the state's wine industry is on its way up.

According to the Virginia Tourism Corp., there were fewer than 50 wineries in Virginia 20 years ago. Now, there are more than 130. A number of them host festivals that draw thousands of visitors.

A survey by the tourism corporation showed that more than one million visitors to Virginia stopped by a winery.

Last year, Virginia caught the attention of Travel & Leisure magazine, which called the Commonwealth one of the recommended new wine destinations.

Britt said his magazine can be found locally at the Boonsboro Road Kroger. It's also in some other Kroger stores, Giant food stores in Northern Virginia, as well as some Barnes & Noble stores.