

# RETURN OF RIESLING



*A noble wine is reborn in Missouri at Westphalia Vineyards.* BY JACK WAX

**ABOUT A MILE** and a half outside of Westphalia overlooking a stretch of the meandering Maries River, Terry Neuner is coaxing a Missouri grape back to life. This January, a full seven years after he began his quest to resurrect Missouri Riesling grapes, he will put his Westphalia Vineyards label on the first bottle of Missouri Riesling wine crafted in almost a hundred years. In doing so, Terry will claim the distinction of being the world's sole source of this classic Missouri wine.

"The Missouri Riesling was considered to be an extinct grape," Terry says. "The only reason we found it is because of Thomas Jefferson. He named Cornell University the first land-grant college, and he gave it one mission: preserve every American grape species."

Missouri Riesling was widely available until Prohibition. In 1919, the last Missouri Riesling vine was yanked from its native soil. It wasn't until 2005 that Terry tracked down the one surviving plant specimen of Missouri Riesling. The plant was 1,000 miles away, kept alive since 1890 in a plant bank at Cornell University's Agricultural Experimentation Center in Geneva, New York. Starting with five cuttings from the heritage vine, he has been patiently propagating the plant—taking cuttings then growing them and taking more cuttings from the new generation. He now has 400 thriving Missouri Riesling vines.

Terry takes pride in crafting wines that never see the inside of a stainless steel tank and are made without added chemicals.

"If you ferment in oak, the byproducts from fermentation are immediately absorbed, and you don't have to deal with them chemically later. It's a real natural way to make wine, and people can taste the difference. Our wines will taste fresher to you."

Terry is a natural at wine making. Born to a family that appreciates

its German heritage, he grew up on a farm, eventually earning a master's in biochemistry from the University of Missouri. After graduating, he worked for MFA, studying fermentation and writing research grants that led to the growth of America's ethanol industry.

This work was followed by another successful career with the 3M Corporation where he developed business opportunities in Europe and Asia. While living overseas with his family, he also developed an extensive knowledge of wines of the world.

After retiring, Terry returned to Osage County with plans to start a family business that would include his two sons and preserve Westphalia's history. He began by renovating and adding onto an 1840s stone farmhouse surrounded by farmland and vineyards where he and his wife, Mary, now live. Next, he restored the farm's pre-Civil War barn, converting it into his winery.

Four years ago, Terry bought and remodeled the Westphalia Inn, which first opened its doors to travelers in 1930. No longer a hotel, the inn's sleeping rooms are gone, converted into a spacious wine tasting room—where Terry can frequently be found behind the counter—and a restaurant and gift shop overseen by Mary.

The Westphalia Inn is located on Main Street, near St. Joseph Catholic Church, whose landmark steeple set against the hills of the village of Westphalia can be seen from miles around, the same today as when its church bells first rang out in 1838.

*Tours of Westphalia Vineyards can be arranged. The winery's tasting room in the Westphalia Inn is open on Fridays from 5 to 8:30 PM, Saturdays from 4:30 to 8:30 PM, and Sundays from 11:30 AM to 6:30 PM.*

[www.westphaliavineyards.com](http://www.westphaliavineyards.com)