



A Family Affair at Chateau Miechtry

Kathy Patrick

A glass of chardonnay on the stone entrance
with Rich Mountain in the background.



*“Arrive as strangers,
leave as family.”*

Mile markers for all the local vineyards & attractions in the area.

Turning strangers into family is the mantra at Chateau Meichtry Winery (pronounced “My-Tree”). What that slogan doesn’t cover is just how much fun you’ll have at this winery while losing your “strangeness”! A recent weekend visit found the tasting room hopping, crowded with couples and smiling groups sampling wines and enjoying wonderful live music. Add in novel gift items to browse during your visit, complimentary local cheeses and bread, an outdoor deck with lovely vineyard and mountain views, and a dog-friendly garden area lorded over by Shooter, the black lab, and it won’t take long for you to feel right at home.

The main hosts at Chateau Meichtry actually are family. Karin is the granddaughter of Stephan Meichtry, who emigrated from Switzerland in the 1920’s and developed his passion for winemaking in New York. That love of winemaking continues with Karin’s family. Her husband, Bobby, is the jack-of-all-trades in running the vineyard and equipment. Her son, Justin, is the winemaker and her daughter, Courtney, rules the tasting room. Karin designed and managed construction of both the beautiful tasting room and the chateau. The chateau doubles as Bobby and Karin’s home (upper level) and an event space, barrel room, and Justin’s

private wine cellar (lower level).

Justin started his winemaking career in 2012, when he apprenticed for Maria Peterson at Montaluce Winery outside Dahlonega. After completing his apprenticeship, Maria suggested Justin find a mentor to support his ongoing work at Chateau Meichtry. Justin hired Joe Smith, the winemaker at Yonah Mountain Winery and owner/winemaker at Serenity Cellars Winery, as a consultant. Over the years Justin and Joe have become friends and colleagues, regularly bouncing new ideas (and new wines) off one another. These relationships highlight the mutual support that is found throughout North Georgia’s wine community, where helping to grow the industry is the driving force and cooperation rules over competition. As Bobby puts it, “Would you go to Napa if there was only one winery?”

Tours are available by reservation on Saturdays and Sundays at 12:30pm, and weekdays by reservation for parties of six or more. Taking about 90 minutes, tours start with tastings of five wines and a full glass of a favorite to take along. The second leg reviews the history of the business, beginning with “Papa”, as Stephan Meichtry is lovingly known, and covering Karin and Bobby’s journey from the corporate world to running a small family business, construction of the tasting room

and chateau, and future plans. The tour then moves to the vineyard for some fascinating lessons in viticulture, the story of how a big family reunion helped get the first batch of vines in the ground, and how crucial weather is to making good wine. Next is the winery and barrel rooms to learn how the wine is made and aged, and to stroll through the events area where lots of fun (and lots of the wine making) happens.

The highlight at the tour's end is Justin's private wine cellar: a delightful North Georgia grotto hidden behind a secret bookcase door, speakeasy fashion. Knowing the right button to push reveals an arched wooden ceiling mimicking the curve of a wine barrel, walls thick with cool stone, and a toothy statue of Bacchus grinning among the wine racks. Stored in the racks are samples of every vintage that Justin has bottled since the first Chateau Meichtry harvest. The price of the tour nets you a peak at which button to push (or was that which book to pull, darn it, I forget now).

The winery is a prime spot for small weddings or other private events. Depending on the size of your group, there's ample space outdoors or in the winery's event space; future plans call for a separate covered space geared specifically to larger weddings. With gorgeous mountain views, the calming sight of cows lolling about the neighboring meadows, the vaulted European-style chateau, and the undulating vineyard rows, this is definitely the place for a storybook

Chateau Meichtry Wines on display next to the Old Green House Stage & Patio.



wedding or other impressive happening.

There's plenty of fun to be had at Chateau Meichtry on more ordinary days as well. Open 363 days a year (they close only on Thanksgiving and Christmas), with live music every Saturday and Sunday, the winery also hosts some very creative annual events. February features an Italian dinner, April offers a murder mystery dinner, the Friday after Memorial Day is the Wine and Swine pig roast and pickin', September's event is Paella Night, with paella cooked in a five foot wide pan over an open fire, and New Year's Eve brings a low country boil. These events are reasonably priced and include a bottle of wine per couple with an event ticket (these go fast online, so be sure to snag yours early).

Chateau Meichtry is dedicated to giving back to their community via periodic fund-raisers benefitting causes such as local hospice, childhood literacy, the community foodbank, and Pets for Vets, to name just a few. Their 2018 calendar includes six charitable events and the winery also donates all gratuities to St. Jude Children's Hospital.

Featuring wines made primarily from their own or other Georgia grapes, the wines of Chateau Meichtry are quite delicious. Varieties include chardonnay, seyval blanc, a sweet vidal blanc dessert wine, merlot, cabernet sauvignon, and several red blends. Other varieties are available throughout the year, depending on the harvest, and wines are currently only offered for sale at the

The tasting room at Chateau Meichtry.



winery. Sweet and aromatic muscadine wines from Currahee Winery are also available for tasting and for sale; these scrumptious wines feature fruity tastes of peach, strawberry, blackberry, and blueberry.

Bring your better half, your kids, your friends, your dog, you can even bring a picnic lunch to Chateau Meichtry as there is no full-service restaurant, but food trucks are commonly set up on site. You may arrive at your first visit as strangers, but you'll leave as family members forever welcome back at this lively and beautiful mountain winery.

Photos by Courtney Keogh



Kathy Patrick owns *Meals on Heels*, a personal chef service. Kathy makes entertaining in your home fun, easy and delicious!

Enjoy hosting dinner parties, holiday occasions, and other special events with Kathy's expertise. Kathy is happily married to Marty Cipollini. She enjoys herb gardening and exercising. Reach her at greatfood@mealsonheelsga.com.



Chateau Meichtry Family Vineyard and Winery

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Open 7 Days a Week:

Monday – Saturday 11am – 6pm,

Sunday 12:30pm – 5:30pm

