

# Explore New England

VERMONT

## Coolly redefining 'vintage'

By Neece Regis  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BURLINGTON — Roll down the windows. That's the first thing I do after easing off the interstate. As I cruise along roads with unfamiliar names that hug northern Vermont's undulating landscape, the humid air is filled with the scents of bluegrass and clover, sugar maple and spruce, and fields of blooming wildflowers. I inhale deeply, and as my trusty van crests a hill above Route 15 I see what I'm looking for: rows and rows of neatly spaced grape vines.

Grapes are not the first crop that comes to mind when we think about Vermont. Maple syrup, apples, cheese, butter, ice cream? Sure. Grapes for making wine? Not so much. But if the Vermont Grape and Wine Council makes its mark, we will discover another reason to tour the Green Mountain State.

On a weekend trip, I can't tour all 21 wineries and tasting rooms promoted in the council's Wine Passport Program. (Visit at least 10 to become eligible for prizes.) So I plan to stay in Burlington on Lake Champlain and visit four in the vicinity.

These northern, cool-climate vineyards all plant hybrid grapes, a combination of European varieties for wine quality and native vines for hardiness. In the past 10 years, vintners have added Minnesota hybrids (including Frontenac, La Crescent, Sabrevois, and Marquette), varieties that survive in temperatures of 30 degrees below zero. In addition, they have looked to Canada for inspiration and are producing quality ice wines — dessert wines made from grapes frozen while still on the vine.

First stop, **Boyden Valley Winery**. Flagstone steps lead to the red carriage barn, circa 1875, that serves as welcome center, tasting room, and sales office at this 1,000-acre farm.

I'm greeted by Bridget Jones, the wine room manager, who is about to lead a tour of the tank and barrel room and bottling facilities.

"We grow about 70 percent of the grapes we use on the property," said Jones. "The rest we import from other growers in Vermont or nearby."

Four generations of Boydens have worked this land, most recently as a dairy farm, but in 1997 owner David Boyden and his wife started the winery. (His brother is growing organic corn and soybeans on another part of the property with the goal of raising organic beef.) From 8,000 grapevines, they produced about 6,500 cases of wine last year.

Standing between stainless steel tanks and French oak casks, we watch a short film to learn the basics of grape growing, harvesting, and wine production. Near the bottling apparatus, David Boyden stirs giant vats of fruit fermenting in open steel containers.

"We make cranberry and blueberry wines in the summer before the grapes are harvested in the fall and wine production begins," said Boyden. "We had friends in the wine business in Quebec and Europe. We've tried to learn from growers in colder climates."

Back in the tasting room, Jones offers samples of white, rosé, and red wines, as well as fruit, dessert, ice wines, and a recent creation, an ice

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NEECE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Vines at one of the more than 20 wineries in Vermont: Lincoln Peak Vineyard in New Haven.

SoWa Vintage Market appeals to collectors.



"First Fridays" make for busy art galleries open late.



Tom McCarthy paints in the SoWa studio he got just this year. The SoWa Open Market offers arts and crafts on Sundays in May through October.



Bounty in bloom at the farmers' market includes fresh eggs (below).



One visitor amid Saja Cullinan's vinyl bags, and others at lunch.



A Friday evening at NK Gallery or at the restaurant Estragon, with a tapas of toast topped with tomato, white anchovies, and Manchego cheese.

PHOTOS BY NEECE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

# SO WA

'A little pocket of the South End' spills over with arts, crafts, food, flora, and its own funky acronym for South of Washington Street

BY NEECE REGIS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Y**ou know the story: A rundown neighborhood of warehouses with low rents attracts artists and creative types. Soon galleries, bakeries, and boutiques appear, creating a buzz. Then before you can say "gentrify," rents skyrocket and artists are priced out of yet another place to call home.

In the 1980s, the South End, with the largest district of Victorian row houses listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States, was being renovated at a rapid pace. Not so the area one block beyond Washington Street where large, brick-and-beam factory buildings, erected 150 years ago to house canneries, piano factories, and other industries, seemed less desirable to anyone other than artists.

And so the acronym SoWa (South of Washington Street) was created to draw new business and development to this neighborhood-within-a-neighborhood.

In SoWa today there are dozens of galleries, destination-worthy restaurants, PR agencies, graphic- and interior-design studios, residential lofts, and shops selling goods such as vintage clothing, beads, and handmade tribal rugs. And, lucky for Boston, the artists have been encouraged to stay. With hundreds of studios in buildings throughout the area, one might even say that artists are the heart and soul of SoWa around which the galleries, restaurants, craft markets, food trucks, and festivals revolve.

On a recent evening, the galleries along Harrison Avenue were packed with visitors of all ages who arrived for the monthly "First Friday" art openings. Plastic cups were filled with wine and sparkling water, the mood convivial. Friends greeted friends with air kisses and hugs, threading their way through crowds that circulated through the white-walled exhibits.

In the Bromfield Gallery, artist Judy Riola stood alongside her work, "Jumping-off Point," a brightly patterned oil and acrylic painting created in her nearby studio.

"SoWa is one of the areas that developed for artists that continues to



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# Neighborly about art, food, commerce, crafts

► **SOWA**  
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support artists," said Riola. Elizabeth Strasser, another gallery artist, agreed: "It's a very vibrant area. It's made that way by the artists and galleries and shops. None of that was here 10 years ago."

Business was brisk in Bead and Fiber, a craft gallery selling necklaces, scarves, bracelets, and artwork as well as the materials to create your own. (The gallery also offers classes.)

"SoWa is a destination all itself, a little pocket of the South End. People walk over and stay, unexpectedly," said owner Andrea Garr.

It's possible to dine on a variety of cuisines. On Washington Street alone you'll find Asian (Myers + Chang, Oishii, Seiyō), Middle East and Mediterranean (Red Fez), New American (Union Bar and Grille, The Gallows), Italian (Stella and Stella Café), Spanish tapas (Toro), Senegalese (Teranga), and hearty, home-style American (Mike's City Diner). In addition, there are many cafes, bakeries, and pizza parlors.

After an evening of art hobnobbing, a brief stroll along Harrison Avenue led us to Estragon, a stylish tapas bar run by Madrid-born chef Julio de Haro and his partner, Lara Gavigan. At the white marble bar, under the cheerful gaze of the owners' old-time family photos, we sampled



"First Fridays" in SOWA gladden the hearts of gallery owners when crowds show up to look and maybe buy. A busy Friday evening at Carroll and Sons gallery at 450 Harrison Ave., and, up the street at 560, diners at Gaslight Brasserie du Coin.

PHOTOS BY NEECE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Serrano ham croquettes, toast topped with tomato, white anchovies, Manchego cheese, and coca de bitfana, a pizza-like offering featuring white sausage, arugula, and caramelized onions.

We returned to SoWa on Sunday to check out three big markets, two of which operate from May through October. They are a farmers' market, an open-air crafts and art market (with food trucks), and an indoor vintage

market that plans to be open through late December this year.

First, we fueled up with a hearty breakfast at Gaslight Brasserie, a classic neighborhood French bistro. Brazilian samba music bounced off the white tile walls, making a low-key Sunday morning even more relaxing as we indulged in flaky raspberry croissants, a croque madame, and scrambled eggs with tasso ham and roasted red peppers.

A full breakfast blunted our desire to purchase everything in sight at the nearby SoWa Farmers Market. One could, of course, arrive hungry and enjoy samples from the many vendors offering locally crafted pastries, honey, bread, marmalade, relish, cupcakes, smoked seafood, and pesto. Local farms displayed the bounty of the season that recently included ears of fresh-picked corn, heirloom tomatoes, kale, rainbow chard, pumpkins, eggs, flowers, and many varieties of apples.

People lined up to buy almond croissants, apple bear claws, and berries and cream tarts at The Danish Pastry House, a local bakery. Though sorely tempted, we resisted.

We strolled to the area of galleries, studios, and shops between 450 and 460 Harrison Ave., where a pedestrian-only walkway called Thayer Street led to the lively SoWa Open Market, located in a parking lot at the far end.

The food trucks offered a United Nations of lunch choices, including Vietnamese rice bowls, barbecued ribs, Italian ice, gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, hot dogs, curried goat stew, cupcakes, vegetarian sandwiches, and soft-serve ice cream. Happy eaters perched on the decorative curved walls near the galleries, apparently the preferred dining spot of the day.

For shopping, rows of white tents held sellers offering all manner of art, crafts, and indie-



designed objects including silk-screen prints, paintings, jewelry, T-shirts, cards, handbags, dresses, ceramics, woven scarves, hand-knit sweaters and caps, birdhouses, and maps.

Artist Saya Cullinan, who has a studio in the 450 Harrison Ave. complex, designs functional, one-of-a-kind handbags in all kinds of upholstery fabrics.

"I like that this area is more accessible to the public," said Cullinan. "There's a lot of stuff happening here, more foot traffic, restaurants, and shops. There's a reason for people to come here now."

The SoWa Vintage Market offers everything you might imagine under the heading "antiques and collectibles," proving the adage that one person's junk is another's treasure: baseball cards, glassware, sheet music, porcelain pitchers, old suitcases (without wheels), clothing, cut crystal bowls, silver candelabras, gilt-framed mirrors, toasters, jewelry, and more.

Public bathrooms are located in the 450 Harrison Ave. building, at the end of the hallway past the artists' studios. Some studios (and most galleries) are open on Sundays, so if you miss the Friday night festivities you can still see the newest exhibits.

The walls of artist Tom Mc-

Carthy's studio are lined with colorful paintings including his iconic series of the neon Citgo sign in Kenmore Square. He moved into this studio three months ago, and already has sold two paintings.

"There's a two-year waiting list to get in here," said McCarthy.

As morning progressed into afternoon, it became difficult for a claustrophobic visitor to navigate between cheerful hoards of shoppers, foodies, art lovers, baby strollers, leashed dogs, toddlers, and picnickers sprawled across every available surface.

Of course, one doesn't have to visit SoWa only during these orchestrated events. On a weekday afternoon on Washington Street, the used clothing and accessory shop Boomerangs had customers wandering in and out at a steady pace. One of four stores owned by the AIDS Action Committee, this one specializes in better labels of clothing for men and women.

"We've been here a year and a half and have become a community store," said manager Kristine Jespersen. "We try and support artists. We've had exhibitions here, and artists also shop here."

As SoWa grows and becomes more successful, some worry that the artists will inevitably be pushed out by rising rents.

## If you go . . .

**What to do**  
**SoWa Open Market**  
460 Harrison Ave.  
800-403-8305  
www.sowaopenmarket.com  
Crafts, art, and food trucks galore. Sundays 10 a.m.-4 p.m., May 1-Oct. 30. Free.  
**SoWa Farmers Market**  
500 Harrison Ave.  
800-403-8305  
www.sowaopenmarket.com/farmmktinfo/  
Locally grown produce and specialty food products from New England.  
Sundays 10 a.m.-4 p.m., May 1-Oct. 30. Free.  
**SoWa Vintage Market**  
460C Harrison Ave.  
(GPS address: 365 Albany St., 02118)  
www.sowavintagemarket.com  
Vintage and antiques, mid-century modern, industrial, fashion, and accessories. Sundays 10 a.m.-4 p.m., May 1-Dec. 18. Free.

**First Friday**  
Galleries host parties for new exhibitions; artist studios and retail businesses are open late. Activity centers around the complexes at 450 and 460 Harrison Ave., and extends to other locations including the Boston Sculptors Gallery (486) and Laconia Gallery (433).  
From 5-9 p.m. Free.  
Parking is free on Sundays for market visitors in the lot next to Gaslight Brasserie, 560 Harrison Ave. Closer to the markets, parking is available for \$5 at 540 Harrison Ave.

**Where to eat**  
**Estragon**  
700 Harrison Ave.  
617-266-0443  
www.estragontapas.com  
Dinner tapas \$5.50-\$15.  
**Gaslight Brasserie du Coin**  
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www.gaslight560.com  
Classic French bistro fare. Dinner entrees \$15.75-\$26.75; weekend brunch \$7.50-\$15.75.

"I hope that it doesn't turn into another SoHo," said Strasser, referring to an area in New York settled by artists and now overrun with high-priced boutiques. Strasser has exhibited at the Bromfield Gallery for 10 years and is cautiously optimistic the area can retain its creative base.

"One of the upsides of the down economy is that people are thinking local and celebrating things regional," she said.

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**Shelburne Falls**

## From picking grapes to pouring tastes

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heard to major in." They worked together to start the vineyard, which "came into existence" in 1996. Lebowitz admits he chose the name because "it sounded Vermont-y. Ernest and Julio Lebowitz doesn't sound too good."

The vineyard produces about 2,800 cases a year. They also manage two satellite tasting rooms: one in Quechee, and the other at Cabot Cheese and Green Mountain Chocolate complex in Waterbury.

"I call it the cholesterol mile," Lebowitz joked. "There's Ben and Jerry's, the Cabot Cheese and chocolate. Our red wines break the cholesterol."

Day two: After a good night's sleep and a swim in Lake Champlain, I'm ready to taste more wine. I aim the van south on Route 7 from Burlington, and in a mere 15 minutes arrive at the **Shelburne Vineyard**.

The bright and airy barn may look rustic but in fact it's only three years old. Inside, it's a state-of-the-art winery with a wood-polished bar that serves customers daily, year round.

Owners Gail and Ken Albert started the business 13 years ago, first by leasing land from nearby Shelburne Farms (still in use) and then purchasing more.

It's a scenic drive across the Roosevelt Highway causeway out to the **Snow Farm Vineyard** in South Hero, an island in Lake Champlain. The tasting room and retail store occupy a restored barn atop a hill brushed by cool breezes.

"The lake provides a microclimate for us, so the island has a growing season 30 days longer than the rest of Vermont," said Marilyn Connor, who describes her job as "a little bit of everything" from picking grapes to pouring.

Snow Farm Vineyard was created out of a concern that agricultural land in Vermont was being lost to residential and commercial development. When owner Harrison Lebowitz and his wife, Molly, first moved to the state, they became upset after learning a local dairy farm had gone bankrupt. A chemistry major in college who knew nothing about making wine, Lebowitz thought there had to be a way to keep farms open and working. In doing research, the couple met winemaker Patrick Barrelet, who had trained in Dijon, France.

"He majored in pinot noir," said Lebowitz. "That was way better than anything I'd ever



Owner David Boyden stirs a vat of fermenting fruit at the Boyden Valley Winery in Cambridge, Vt. Ken Albert, below, owner of Shelburne Vineyard in Shelburne, Vermont, checks the steel tanks that help produce thousands of cases of wine each year.

PHOTOS BY NEECE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

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# Encouraged to grow by vintners in even cooler climes

Continued from preceding page

in our little garden in the woods," said Gail. "Ken saw all the vineyards in Quebec and thought, if they can do it in Canada, we can do it in Vermont."

The winery uses 50 percent of its own grapes and 50 percent of grapes grown in the Finger Lakes of New York and Vermont, and produces about 3,000 cases per year. They use Vidal Blanc grapes for their ice wines.

"Ice wine is getting quite popular in Vermont," said Gail.

Before leaving, I peer into a room filled with enormous steel tanks. The winery offers free tours throughout the day, but with one more place to visit I bid goodbye and hit the road.

On a hilltop just north of Middlebury is **Lincoln Park Vineyard**. The one-story tasting room, with its brick pathway between well-tended gardens and a long expanse of deck overlooking a pond with osprey, feels more like entering the home of old friends than a commercial establishment. Indeed, it's a family-run business.

"I've been involved in the farm since the day I was born," said Sara Granstrom. She has just come in from a day tending the vines. "We had pick your own strawberries on this land for 25 years."

Sara's dad, Chris Granstrom,



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Ben Esser Calvi pours wine for some waiting tasters at Lincoln Peak Vineyard in New Haven, Vt.

has been farming in the Champlain Valley for over 30 years and mom Michaela is an art teacher who helps farm in summer. Credited with being the first vineyard

in the state to plant large amounts of Minnesota hybrids, Lincoln Park also uses an innovative trellis system, the Geneva Double Curtain which uses two

sets of wires to spread out the vines so they train downward.

They currently plant about 12 acres, and use all their own grapes in wine production that

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**Snow Farm Vineyard**  
 190 West Shore Road  
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802-372-9463  
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[www.snowfarm.com](http://www.snowfarm.com)  
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**Shelburne Vineyard**  
 6308 Shelburne Road  
 Shelburne  
 802-985-8222  
[shelburnevineyard.com](http://shelburnevineyard.com)  
 Taste eight wines for \$5 and keep souvenir glass.  
**Lincoln Peak Vineyard**  
 142 River Road, New Haven  
 802-388-7368  
[www.lincolnpeakvineyard.com](http://www.lincolnpeakvineyard.com)  
 Taste six wines for free; ice wine \$3 a sample.  
**Information**  
[www.vtgrapeandwinecouncil.com](http://www.vtgrapeandwinecouncil.com)

yields about 2,000 cases a year. All the grapes are harvested and pressed the same day.

In early August, the grapes are just beginning to turn from green to red, a process called "veraison," a French term that means "the onset of ripening." Out in the vineyard, Sara Granstrom points to a trellis heavy with firm,

purplish orbs.

"This is the second most exciting time of year, other than the harvest," said Granstrom. "Every time I see it, it blows me away anew. You can start to taste harvest on the horizon."

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