



The Blues + Beautiful Weather = Outdoor Entertainment at The Vineyards

by Pat Schwarte, Account Manager
May 19 2019 1:20 PM





GRAFTON - The 10th annual Grafton Winery & Brewhaus Blues Festival began yesterday at The Vineyards in Grafton. The weather was breezy and in the mid-80's with a cloud cover that made for cool blues listening.

Saturday's lineup for the free, two-day festival, started with the Joe Metzka Band followed by the Ivas John Band. Both groups entertained the crowd playing from an arbor located at the bottom of a crescent hillside allowing the music to be heard by a large crowd seated on an expansive patio above.

The Vineyards, an extension of Grafton Winery & Brewhaus, was opened in 2015 when wholesale demand for their wine overwhelmed their production capabilities. In addition to a much larger production facility, owners Mike and Lori Nickonovich added a large bar area and a massive pavilion capable of seating up to 350 people. Outside they are growing Chardonnay, Vidal and Vignoles grapes on four acre vineyard.

In August of last year, the St. Louis Business Journal ranked Grafton Winery the 3rd largest winery, ranked by cases produced, in the St. Louis Area having produced 13,000 cases in 2017. According to Mike Nickonovich, in 2018 they produced 36,000 gallons of wine and will produce more in 2019.

Saturday's crowd was lively as they listened to the blues played by both bands, sipped wine or any other of the many available beverages and ate food provided by the StLouisiana Food Truck. In addition to the Blues Festival being a free event, there is plenty of free parking as well.

From inside the bar/reception area, glass windows line two of the production area's walls exhibiting the clean stainless steel tanks, spotless concrete floor and a bottling line that's increased output exponentially taking production from 80-100 cases a day to 100 cases an hour.

Sunday's talent includes the NGK band playing from 11:00 to 2:00pm and Billy Peak playing from 3:00 to 6:00pm. Weather will be partly sunny with temps in the mid 70's. Mike says that Billy Peak will play inside the large pavilion because "Peak's followers love to dance and the pavilion allows for application of dance floor powder."

Grafton Winery & Brewhaus markets to all of Illinois except Chicago and has plans to move into the Missouri market. In addition they have a wine club with 500 members; every quarter they hold a wine club mixer where wine club members and guests come in to pick up their 3 bottles of wine, enjoy each other and, of course, sip wine. The next wine club mixer is June 2.

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Grafton Winery - The Vineyards

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