

# Davie County Vineyards: Ideal Complement for the Holidays



Do you still need to buy for a Christmas gift for someone but loathe the thoughts of facing the throngs at a massive shopping mall or wandering around a big-box outlet hoping to find inspiration on its sterile shelves?

There's no need to panic. Just head to one of Davie County's wineries and pick up a bottle of wine or two for the yet-to-be-gifted adults on your shopping list. The diversity of offerings means you're sure to find something to please their palate, and the soothing, pastoral settings of the vineyards that can be seen from the tasting rooms will give you a chance to cool your jets during this sometimes frantic time of year.

A couple of tips before you make your grape escape from the holiday crowds. If possible, try to find out what food the wine will accompany. Opinions vary, of course, but generally speaking a Pinot Noir or Syrah goes well with turkey, Malbec or Merlot are great matches for prime rib, and a stronger red such as Cabernet is called for with lamb. And as more than one critic has pointed out, you can almost never go wrong with a sparkling wine because the sound of the cork being popped is a siren call for celebration.

There's one other advantage to following our advice: by shopping at these wineries, you'll also be investing in Davie County, where many of you live and work. Every dollar spent in Davie County will help grow the community and give your friends and neighbors a chance to prosper in the coming year.

With that in mind, here's a look at some of the spots you'll want to check out.

## **RayLen Vineyards & Winery**

3577 Highway 158, Mocksville

336-998-3100

Tasting Room Hours: 11AM – 6PM Monday-Saturday, Closed Sundays

Open Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve 11AM – 3PM, Closed Christmas and New Year's Day

If you're looking for the broadest selection of wines from which to choose, head to RayLen Vineyards and Winery in Mocksville. Established by Joseph and Joyce Neely in 2000 and named after their daughters, Rachel and Helen, RayLen's production is headed up by longtime vintner Steve Shepard. RayLen produced just 2500 cases of five types of wines that first year; a dozen years later, production had soared by over 300 percent and now comprises 16 different varieties. The rapid expansion didn't come up at the expense of quality, but rather because of it. RayLen has racked up numerous state and regional awards and is renowned as one of the top wineries in the Southeast.

If the large selection has you uncertain what wine to select, try one of RayLen's wine flights, which gives you the opportunity to sample from a broad array of offerings. Both the Red Flight (six wines) and the White Flight (seven wines) are just \$6.00, while the Complete Flight is \$10.00 and comprises just about everything RayLen produces.



Besides producing top-notch wine, RayLen also hosts open houses, music festivals, and is available for private events such as weddings or birthday parties. [Visit the Web site](#) to learn more and sign up as a member of the “Cellar Club” to have wines delivered to your home on a regular basis.



### **Misty Creek Vineyards**

710 Wyo Road

Mocksville, NC 27028

336-998-3303

Tasting Room Hours: 4PM – 8PM

Fridays, 10AM – 8PM Saturdays, 2PM

– 6PM Sundays

Nestled a couple of miles off Farmington Road between Huntsville

and Farmington is Misty Creek Vineyards, producers of numerous award-winning wines since 2001. But owner Barry Nichols, who enjoyed a 30-plus-year career in the aerospace industry, has been involved with wines much longer than that: he first started working with the fruit of the vine the same year that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. Now, he and wife Kathy oversee the production of five varietals (four reds, one white) and two blends (Barrel House Blend and Misty Rose).

But while it’s the wines that will bring you out Misty Creek, it’s the welcoming atmosphere that’s likely to keep you coming back. The winery is both family- and pet-friendly, and Barry encourages visitors to bring their own food—there’s a grill available for cooking—and enjoy a bottle of their prize-winning Chardonnay or Chambourcin at the outdoor pavilion that overlooks a pond in the midst of the vineyard. Or just stop by and try the Misty Creek Flight featuring samples of all seven wines for just \$5.

Like RayLen, Misty Creek hosts special events throughout the year centered around food, music, artisans, and activities. [Keep an eye on the event calendar](#) to see what’s in store in the coming months.

### **Garden Gate Vineyards**



261 Scenic Drive, Mocksville

336-751-3794

Tasting Room Hours: 12 Noon to 5PM Wednesday-Saturday

While North Carolina’s reputation as winemaking state has soared over the past decade, there’s no question that vintners here face special challenges when trying to make European-style varietals. But Garden Gate Vineyards’ owners Sonya and Bob Whitaker have come up with a solution: creating wines using local fruits such as blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries, as well as relying on indigenous grapes like the Scuppernong and Muscadine.

Grown without pesticides, all Garden Gate’s wines are priced at \$12 bottle (a free bottle is thrown in when you purchase a case). In addition to its fruity wines and Scuppernong and Muscadine, the Whitakers have recently added a Zinfandel and a

Merlot to the roster, along with a Sangria (based on the strawberry wine) and a specialty run called “Jitterbug.” Starting to feel the nip of winter? Sample the warm, soothing Dragonfly Wassail the Whitakers created for the holidays.

Those unfamiliar with fruity or sweeter wines will appreciate the fact Garden Gate offers free tastings, and everyone will enjoy the small winery’s friendly atmosphere. Get directions and learn more about the nutritional benefits of Muscadine grapes at [Garden Gate’s little nook on the Web](#).



### **Lazy Elm Vineyard & Winery**

523 Danner Road, Mocksville

336-909-4914

Tasting Room Hours: 12 Noon to 5PM, Saturday and Sunday

One of the newest arrivals on the Davie County wine scene is Lazy Elm Vineyard and Winery. The five-and-a-half-acre vineyard sits on a 43-acre farm in Mocksville about a mile east of Highway 601.

For its initial lineup, Lazy Elm has been purchasing grapes from a Surry County vineyard located within the Yadkin Valley American Viticultural Area to create three reds and a rose; it also has been producing a sweet apple wine. Last year marked its first plantings in the vineyard: Montepulciano, Petit Verdot, Mourvedre, and Malbec comprise the lineup of reds and Vermentino, a variety used in Italian wines, will be the flagship white wine.

While the tasting room is currently open only on weekends, you can also call to set up a time to stop by during the week. Just bring a couple of glasses and perhaps a picnic lunch, then grab a bottle of wine and relax in a peaceful setting. Find out more about Lazy Elm and keep up to date on their upcoming varietals [by heading to their Web site](#).