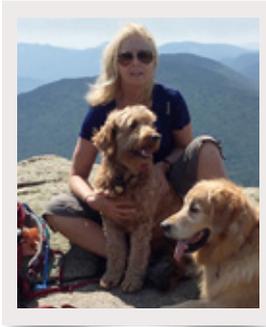


THE WINE Enthusiast



During the work week, you'll usually find Wendy Olcott spending her days in the Marketing Department at the New Hampshire Liquor Commission; a job new to her in May of this year. But when the clock strikes 5 p.m. on Friday afternoon, you're more likely to discover her filling a backpack, lacing up her hiking boots and heading deep into the White Mountains.

"My favorite thing to do is hike," Olcott says. "This past summer I started going on some longer hikes and it's been really enjoyable. It's something I look forward to each weekend."

She'll typically meet a fellow hiking enthusiast and longtime friend from Vermont or head out into the wilderness with her partner, Russ Nolan, and their two dogs, Ruby and Tucker. When the end of the trail arrives, however, you're just as likely to find Olcott opening a bottle of wine while reflecting on the day's adventures.

"I've enjoyed wine for a very long time," Olcott says. "I definitely prefer red wines over white, in fact, I very rarely drink white wines — and Merlot tends to be my go-to."

It's appropriate, then, that Olcott recently had an opportunity to try a bottle of **2016 Duckhorn Vineyards Napa Valley Merlot**.

ABOUT THE WINE. The 2016 Duckhorn Vineyards Napa Valley Merlot is a blend of several vineyard lots, incorporating fruit from Duckhorn's estate vineyards and from top Napa Valley independent growers. It is a rich expression that reflects the varied microclimates and soils of the appellation. It offers aromas of fresh black raspberry, vanilla, tea leaves, pie crust and licorice. On the palate: strawberry, plum, Bing cherry and loganberry, leading to a lingering finish with hints of maple, cedar and sweet spice.

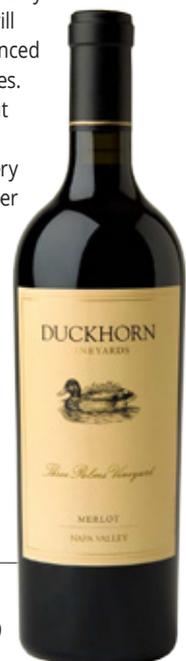
WHAT WAS THE WINE PAIRED WITH? "We had just gone on a long hike that day at Mount Garfield — a 10-mile hike. We got home late, and by the time we got everything unpacked and started dinner prep, it was about 8 p.m. We decided to have it with grilled, marinated steak tips. We grilled some onions and peppers as well, and had quinoa and a salad with local greens and a basic Italian dressing — olive oil and herbs."

TELL US ABOUT THE TASTING EXPERIENCE. "The bottle itself was a nice visual. It was eye-catching, elegant and simple. In the glass, it had a very deep, burgundy red, beautiful color. When we opened it, I immediately noticed aromas of plum and black cherry."

"We had a glass before dinner and then a glass with dinner. Food will sometimes help to balance out a wine, but this wine is really well-balanced to begin with, so I didn't notice a big difference between the two glasses. The dark fruits, plum and cherry, were very enjoyable with and without food."

"The wine was incredibly smooth, and it complemented the food very well. I initially considered having salmon, but I thought something richer would be better, so we went with the steak, which ended up being a nice choice. The wine had a very nice, long-lasting finish that certainly left us wanting more."

WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY? "It's not inexpensive, so for me it would be more of a special occasion bottle of wine. However, when you want to splurge on a really fabulous wine, this would be worth every penny. People approach wine-buying differently depending on their tastes and how much they want to spend, but if someone is looking for a special bottle of wine to enjoy with friends or to gift to someone, this would be an excellent choice. We both thought, for sure, that this was the best wine we'd ever had. It is really amazing."



2016 Duckhorn Vineyards Napa Valley Merlot

#44854 • 750 mL • Regular: \$56.99