

# You can be the vintner at new shop

ONCE YOU START exploring the wine world it's just a matter of time before you begin meeting really interesting people. Renate Wallem is most definitely one.

She has just opened the Vintner's Cellar Custom Winery in Bedford. We e-mailed back and forth

a bit and I paid her a visit last week, right after she had cleared all the license hurdles and opened for business. There's a grand opening coming up later this month, but the shop is up and running now.

Renate was born and raised in Austria and worked in the hospitality industry there, learning about wine and wine and food pairings. After moving here she worked in banking for many years before deciding to take the plunge into wine.



## NOTES FROM THE VINE

Jim Beauregard

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Her shop is a warm, inviting place. Many of the wines that can be made there are available for purchase on site. Renate also holds wine tastings so you can give the wines a try and decide if you'd like to take a go at making some of your own. She has all the equipment on the premises. You can even make your own labels; Renate can work them up for you on a computer to your specifications. Chateau Jim. Hmmm.

Renate is a wine lover herself. I asked her what she likes: "I like both red and wine wines. I like drinking white wines in the spring and summer and red wines during the long New England winters. I like my red wines to be full-bodied and oakey and the white wines I like best when very dry and crisp."

A budding winemaker can do as much or as little in the process as he or she wishes at Vintner's Cellar. You have the ability to customize your wine (for example: add extra oak, add extra tannin, make certain wines sweeter or less sweet, etc.)

As you enter the Vintner's Cellar you are greeted by wine racks that hold the various wines made in the store.

They range in price from \$10.95 to \$14.95. I tried two of them when I visited:

The "Australian Chardonnay" (\$10.95) was clean, crisp and rich without being overwhelmed by oak, youthful and rich in peach and apricot aromas and flavors, as well as some tropical fruit. It was on the medium-bodied area of the Chardonnay spectrum with good acidity and flavor intensity.

The Amarone (\$14.95), which was made and bottled in October of last year, has wonderful flavors of red berries, blackberries, fig and raisin with medium and well-balanced acidity, alcohol and tannin.

Both of these wines could hold their own against many of the wines I've reviewed here. Why so inexpensive? There is no storage in the vineyard's cellars, no cost of transport, marketing, distributing and so on. One pays for the wine, the bottle and the cork, and then you cellar it yourself, the length of time depending on the type of wine. The prices for making about 30 bottles range from \$175 to \$324, depending on the grape and the quality of the juice. That comes out to a very reasonable \$7 to \$9 per bottle.

There are about 40 Vintner's



JAMES BEAUREGARD

Renate Wallem, owner of the new Vintner's Cellar in Bedford

Cellars in the United States and Canada, but each shop reflects its owner. Renate has a large print over the wine making section of the shop that had been handed down through her family in Europe. The caption beneath translates, "Who does not love wine, women and song will be a fool his whole life long." The shop is open weekdays and Saturdays; Sundays and evenings by appointment. I'm planning on going in soon with a group of friends to make some wine. This is going to be fun.

Vintner's Cellar Custom Winery is located at 410 South River Road, Suite 7, Bedford, in the Sebbins Brook Marketplace (look for the yellow building after the Land Rover dealership). Telephone: 627-WINE. The Web site, where you can find info on all of the wines that can be made there, is [www.vintnerscellar.com](http://www.vintnerscellar.com). Wine tastings are \$15 per person (this fee is waived if you decide to make your own wine). Reservations for corporate groups and private parties are welcome.

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