

## Auburn Road Vineyards creates Battleship Red and Battleship White wines to benefit Battleship New Jersey

By Colleen Moore

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Staff photo by Britney

Lillya Jules and Scott Donnini, co-owners of Auburn Road Vineyard & Winery, stand beside their wine that has been chosen as the official wine of the Battleship New Jersey.

**By Tracy R. Wiggins**  
[tsnews@sjnewsco.com](mailto:tsnews@sjnewsco.com)

Stationed peacefully in the Delaware River at the Camden Waterfront, the Battleship New Jersey stands regal, proudly relaying to all its decorated history of serving its country in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf.

However, like most sectors of our nation, it has been affected by the sagging economy. It has recently experienced a reduction in staff, budget and hours.

But the staff at the battleship along with local winemakers at Auburn Road Vineyard & Winery in Pilesgrove are hoping that a new fundraising venture will help plug some of the economic holes for the ship.

Auburn Road Vineyards has created two new wines — the Battleship Red and the Battleship White —

that will be offered at various venues, including local retail liquor shops, Auburn Road Vineyards and the ship itself. A portion of each bottle sold will go directly to the Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial.

According to Scott Donnini, co-owner of Auburn Road Vineyards, the project has been a truly collaborative effort right from the start.

Donnini said he and business partner Joe Reilly were attending a Jersey Fresh event held on the Battleship New Jersey in September. While impressed with the event, Donnini said they were astounded by the ship itself.

"It's such an amazing ship with an incredible history," he said.

During the event, Donnini met Jack Willard, senior vice president of Marketing and Sales for the battleship. Their discussion on the ship and its history soon turned to the challenges of operating and preserving the ship, particularly during tough economic times.

When Donnini and Reilly offered to help in any way they could, Willard suggested the idea of a custom wine specifically for the battleship.

"We loved the idea and volunteered to not only make one wine but we would make two — a red and a white," Donnini said. "We'd donate a portion of the proceeds to the ship and have information on the label indicating how people could help or donate if they chose."

Knowing that creating the wines sooner rather than later would truly benefit the battleship, Donnini said they began working on the wines immediately.

He said the red is a medium-bodied, dry blend primarily of merlot with a bit of chambourcin blended in while the white is light and fruity made from the Cayuga grape with hints of apricot.

Once the blends were made, the team at Auburn Road Vineyards along with a team from the battleship began working on names and label designs. Donnini said they came up with many colorful and fancy names, but in the end, they decided to keep it simple and to the point: Battleship Red and Battleship White.

The labels are also fitting. Paying tribute to the Battleship New Jersey's battle service during World War II, each label sports the image of a woman inspired by "Rosie the Riveter." In addition, the ship's number 62 is superimposed behind the woman.

"It was really important to us to make sure we stayed faithful to the history and traditions of the battleship," Donnini said, "so that it would not just appeal to the general public but would also speak to the people who served on her, helped restore her and have volunteered by working on the museum. We spent a lot of time researching with books we bought and on the Internet."

Today, Battleship Red and Battleship White are on the menu for all special events aboard the Battleship New Jersey, according to Willard.

"We have been impressed with the enthusiastic acceptance of the Battleship wine," Willard said. "Auburn Road Vineyards made a very good product. The feedback from people that have tasted the wine has all been exceptional. To date, the wine is selling very well."

Residents from all over the state will be able to taste the wines during the many events held at the battleship, including the Democratic Governors Barbecue, McGuire Air Force Base's Dining Out and the annual Battleship Blast, Willard said.

But the wines are also being offered locally, Donnini said. Currently they can be purchased at Hops & Grapes in Glassboro and Joe Canal's on Route 45 in West Deptford as well as at Auburn Road Vineyards itself.

News of the wines seem to have spread fast.

"We have already received online orders from all over the country," Donnini said.

A floating museum, the Battleship New Jersey is a memorial to thousands, from those who built the ship, to those who served on it, to those who are volunteering on it today. Willard said the ship offers educational programs, overnight encampments and guided and audio tours, knowing that each person who boards the ship helps maintain it. The wines are just another way to support an icon in our state's and nation's history.

"By purchasing the battleship wines, you not only get a delicious product grown and made in New Jersey," Willard said, "but a portion from each bottle sold goes to maintain and preserve the battleship."

A special dinner and wine presentation will also take place at The Enoteca at Auburn Road Vineyards on the evening of June 3. Enjoy a classic Italian seafood dinner, samples of the Battleship Red and Battleship White Wine and a tour of Auburn Road Vineyards for \$35 per person. To make reservations for this special dinner, wine tasting and winery tour, call **(856) 769-WINE** or visit **[www.auburnroadvineyards.com](http://www.auburnroadvineyards.com)**.

For more information on the Battleship New Jersey, visit **[www.battleshipnewjersey.org](http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org)**.

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