



# News Release

301 Gervais St. • Loading Zone D • Columbia SC 29201  
Phone (803) 898-4921 • Fax (803) 898-4969  
publicrelations@scmuseum.org or visit southcarolinastatemuseum.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No: 11054

Oct. 25, 2011

Contacts: Celeste Wszola or  
Tut Underwood

Legal Moonshine & Muscadine  
Wine at S.C. State Museum Tasting  
Nov. 5

Columbia, S.C. – “Everything old is new again.” So goes a famous saying, and it could certainly apply to a couple of the latest darlings of the adult beverage world: legal “moonshine” and muscadine wines. A new spin on some old favorites will be offered Saturday, Nov. 5 from 6 – 9 p.m. as the South Carolina State Museum explores the Palmetto State’s heritage of moonshining and homemade wine-making in an exciting new ticketed event for adults called “Moonshine and Muscadines.”

Dark Corner Distillery of Greenville, which opened in September as the state’s first legal moonshine micro-distillery, will be on hand to offer samples of hand-spirited un-aged corn whiskey. September Oaks Vineyard of Ridgeland and Hyman Vineyards of Conway, both specializing in fine muscadine wines, will conduct tastings of their wines. Hyman will offer bottles for sale. Americana musician Angela Easterling of Greenville will offer her distinctive brand of folk and roots music throughout the evening, providing the perfect musical backdrop for a great evening of unique libations and delicious nibbles.

Joe Fenten of Dark Corner Distillery is a passionate advocate of the product he and partner Richard Wenger have developed. “No one else was making a quality micro-distilled un-aged whiskey, and quite frankly, someone should. So was born Dark Corner Distillery.

“A lot of people put a lot of sugar in their moonshine, and that makes it very alcoholic,” said Fenton. “Our product is made with all corn, and it’s 90 proof. There’s no burn, just a warm, toasty, rich flavor.”

The distillery takes its name from the area around Glassy Mountain Township in the northeastern corner of Greenville County’s Appalachian hills which has been known as the Dark Corner for more than 175 years. Its first settlers were Scots, Irish, Cornish, and Welsh who emigrated to America in colonial times. These Celts brought with them the ancient knowledge of distilling grains to make “the water of life,” which they viewed as a divine creation due to its curative powers and economic value.

After a Federal excise tax was levied against private distilleries after the Civil War, Dark Corner settlers retreated to the backwoods and operated their distilleries at night so that smoke would not be visible to “revenueurs” searching for illegal sites. Because it was distilled by the light of the moon, “moonshine” became the name for illegally distilled homemade whiskey.

Dean Campbell, who was given the name the Squire of Dark Corner in 1977, will accompany Fenton and share stories of this fascinating region’s history.

Muscadine wine-making has an even longer history in America. Wild American grapes known as muscadines are native to the Southeastern United States and can be found still in many a back yard and roadside tangle of woods. Sir Walter Raleigh is credited with “discovering” the grape in 1584. The name “muscadine” has its origins in the early American settlers who called the sweet, musk-scented wild grape after the Muscat grape, a French grape used to make muscatel wine. Recently, muscadines have been found to contain high levels of resveratrol, one of the compounds in red wine believed to help reduce the risk of abnormal cells and heart disease.

Wine-making from muscadines dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Southeast. Indeed, many South Carolinians today treasure memories of homemade wine made by their ancestors from the deep black muscadines and the bronze-green variety known as scuppernongs. “My granddaddy had two scuppernong arbors on the family farm in Allendale County,” recalled State Museum Program Manager Celeste Wszola. “Those grapes were so good we would eat them until we were sick!”

Today, muscadine wine is a fast-growing commercial industry as vintners from the Carolinas to Mississippi and Arkansas rediscover the rich, aromatic native grape. Although many

think of muscadine primarily as sweet dessert wines, there are also many other award-winning varieties being made throughout S.C. and the rest of the Southeast that are quite dry and sophisticated. Once dismissed by wine connoisseurs, today's fine muscadine wines are making them eat—no, make that “drink”—their words.

“We are very excited about the chance to offer this program,” said Wszola. “The nostalgia that these beverages generate will draw people in, but I think many will be quite pleasantly surprised at how these two beverages have come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's not your granddaddy's muscadine wine anymore, and it's certainly not your granddaddy's moonshine!”

Ticket prices are \$25 for the general public, \$20 for members of the State Museum. For advance tickets or more information on this event, visit [southcarolinastatemuseum.org](http://southcarolinastatemuseum.org) or call 803-898-4952.

#####

#### CUTLINE #1 FOR “MOONSHINE AND MUSCADINES”

A historic moonshine still similar to this one can be seen on exhibit, but there's no need to be on the lookout for “revenuers” – it'll all be legal at the South Carolina State Museum's new wine and spirits tasting event “Moonshine and Muscadines,” Saturday, Nov. 5 from 6-9 p.m.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo courtesy S.C. State Museum

#####

#### CUTLINE #2 FOR “MOONSHINE AND MUSCADINES”

Joe Fenten of Dark Corner Distillery will bring his newly-minted “moonshine” and tales will be told about the history of the formerly-illegal distiller's trade at the South Carolina State Museum's new wine and spirits tasting event “Moonshine and Muscadines,” Saturday, Nov. 5 from 6-9 p.m.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo courtesy S.C. State Museum

#####