Blessed with sandy soils and tempered by the Great Lake, Michigan has its own wine country. It is home to more than 60 wineries. One of the most productive areas is in the northwestern part of Michigan outside of Traverse City, the Leelanau peninsula. It has its own wine trail which includes at least 18 wineries and growing in number every year. You’ll find it on the tip of the little finger of the “Michigan mitten.”

One of my favorites is Shady Lane Cellars, located south of Sutton’s Bay. They have a patio where you can sample their wines along with food pairings. Michigan’s climate is often harsh. As a result it’s known best for its Rieslings and white wines. But, they are also trying their hand at cabernet franc and pinot noirs. Some are very nice. If you’re lucky enough to meet the winemaker, Adam Satchwell, you will have a fabulous time tasting his current wines, learning about them and the challenges of winemaking in Michigan.

A second winery you might enjoy is new and located north of Lake Leelanau between Sutton’s Bay and Leland. It’s called Circa Estate Winery. It brings “old world” ambience to the peninsula. Their tasting room looks like its straight out of Tuscany. They have just opened a patio where you can enjoy a view of the vineyards while tasting their new releases. Their wines are delicious!

Both wineries are great places to start your exploration of Michigan wines. Don’t forget to stop in Leland at a wonderful local market, Fishtown. Here you’ll dine on smoked trout or whitefish while you sample the lovely wines you’ve just purchased.

The web site for the Leelanau peninsula wine trail is [www.lpwines.com](http://www.lpwines.com) .

