Bluet is a dry sparkling wine made entirely from wild Maine blueberries. As the weather warms up, look for Bluet appearances around Boston.

By Astrid Lumen

A new wine is popping up around Boston and it contains an unexpected ingredient: blueberries.

Don’t expect a syrupy Boones Farm throwback to the 1980s, though. This colorful libation, called Bluet (pronounced B-Root), is a dry sparkling wine made entirely from wild Maine blueberries, and it bears little resemblance to its sugary predecessor.

According to Bluet’s co-creator Michael Terepka, “Local or regional fruit wine is generally going to be sweet, and this differs.”

The drink advisor’s expectations with one sip, especially for those anticipating the taste of blueberry pie. Terepka explains that this is because fermentation differs from baking, and the result is the essence of blueberry — a potent berry flavor without the sweet taste of sugar. This does not always go over well with tasters anticipating a flavor resembling their morning smoothie or favorite berry crumble.

“A glass of pinot noir doesn’t taste like the pinot noir grape,” he says. “So one has had a pinot noir grape, and they don’t know what it tastes like, but millions of people had blueberries for breakfast this morning.”

The name is a nod to Thomas, who called wild blueberry syrup “hooch” and wrote of its “incongruous ambrosial taste, as if made of the ether itself.”

Each bottle contains about two pounds of the antifungal-rich superfruit, transformed through fermentation into a bubbly beverage. It has a naturally low-alcohol content (8 percent ABV) and no added sugar.

Bluet is not intended to emulate traditional grape wines, but rather it is forging a unique identity and providing a fresh experience for wine drinkers. Although this tart beverage is currently considered a regional delicacy, that may change as it expands beyond its Bluse roots.

Terepka points out that Burgundy, which started as a local wine made in the eastern region of France, has garnered international acclaim over the centuries and now demands premium prices halfway around the globe.

“Burgundy got a thousand-year head start and asks for crazy money in Hong Kong,” he says. “We’re not going to catch up anytime soon, but wild blueberries do really make a nice wine.”

A seasoned winemaker based in Yapa, Terepka collaborated with Eric Martin, his business partner and childhood friend now living in North Carolina, to make Bluet. They both grew up in Maine and met 40 years ago at Waynflete School in Portland. The duo maintained a lifelong friendship and created a reason to spend more time together in their native state.

“This started as a labor of love,” says Martin. “Love of Maine, love of blueberries, love of our time together growing up, our history together.”

They began experimenting with wild blueberries using méthode champenoise, or Champagne method, which requires a secondary fermentation in the bottle. The result is a creamy texture and complex flavor. This version of Bluet, which retails at $40 per bottle, hit the market in 2015, sells out quickly every year, and is currently only available in Maine.

The Champagne method, made in the same style as Prosecco, has a brighter and more vivid color. As the winemakers release their first batch of Champan in 2024 and sell it across the country in a slightly more market-friendly bottle, they already have fans far outside New England.

“Those don’t travel to their production facility, based in Bowdoin, Maine, on a monthly basis. From winer to fermenting and aging, Terepka and Martin constantly improve upon their process and refine their product.

“It’s still growing, and the story is evolving,” Martin says. “The world has moved as quickly in expanding people’s palates.”

In recent months, another motivating factor to expand Bluet’s reach has emerged. The gradual rise in the wine’s production dovetails with the slump of the Maine blueberry industry. In 10 years, from 2007 to 2017, the price of wild Maine blueberries dropped 75 percent, from $1.07 to 26 cents per pound. Terepka and Martin aim to help boost regional blueberry sales with their product. The steep price drop has developed into a crisis and the winemakers believe that adding value could help in the long run if more wineries jump in and develop a market.

“[It’s a situation of] friends wanting to do something good together,”[null] and it just boy right,” Terepka says.

The naturally low-sugar beverage makes for a refreshing aperitif, a complementary pairing with lobster or charcuterie, or as an effective addition to a sweeter connection.

The winemakers recommend all three options, but acknowledge that colorful cocktails tend to be the most common use of the indigo elixir.

Kris Keane, the manager of The Boathouse in Kennebunkport, Maine, added Bluet to the menu last spring. She serves it by the glass (or Champagne flute) as well as in a popular drink called Night Moves — a fresh take on the gin and chapagne classic French 75. The striking line makes Bluet a conversation starter and head turner at The Boathouse bar.

“It moves through the dining room and catches people’s eyes,” Keane says. “It’s so colorful.”

She recalls her skepticism when first trying Bluet, anticipating a cloying experience. “It’s totally different from what people expect. It’s a serious wine,” Keane says. “I was shocked it was so good.”

As the weather warms up, look for Bluet appearances around Boston, including on the menus at Gaslight, Cabot, and Beacon Hill Bistro. Allyn Champagne, a mixologist at Gaslight, served a cocktail with Bluet on an unseasonably warm February afternoon.

While winemakers celebrated on Gaslight’s patio during the New England Patriots Super Bowl victory parade, Champagne featured a drink appropriately called the Lombardi 41.

“Who knows if that name will stick, but we hope to serve more of that cocktail in the weather warms up,” she says.

Joe McHale, the bar manager at Beacon Hill Bistro, is creating his own concoctions with creative names such as Black and Blue and Tangled With Blue.

This spring, Cafe Cadiz, a California restaurant specializing in natural, plant-based cuisine and beverages, will also introduce Bluet to its drink menu. www.bluetwine.com

Michael Terepka, co-creator of Bluet

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TRY THESE COCKTAILS MADE WITH BLUET

THE LOMBARDI 41 (above)
3 ounces Bluet 1 ounce elderflower liqueur 1 ounce honey syrup 1 ounce simple syrup 1 ounce Bluet
Combine all ingredients except the Bluet in a cocktail shaker. Shake and strain over ice, top with Bluet.

BLACK AND BLUET (right)
2 ounces Bluet Two blackberries Mint leaf Mint simple syrup Light sugar
Muddle the blackberries, a mint leaf and mint simple syrup (equal) in a shaker. Drop a pinch of light sugar into a fluted glass. Pour the Bluet into your shaker. Gently pour all contents into your flute glass. Garnish with a mint leaf sprig.

TANGLED UP IN BLUET (below)
3 ounces Pinot Noir rye 1 ounce simple orange syrup 2 ounces Bluet
Add ice to a rocks glass. Garnish with the peach hydra liqueur and the Pahsow rye over the ice. Drizzle the orange simple syrup over the ice. Pour the Bluet as a shot on top. Garnish with fresh blueberries.

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