

5 lessons learned from getting 'Half-Corked' in Osoyoos

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Image: Half-Corked Marathon 2015 (Amy Watkins)

There is a place not too far from Vancouver where oenophiles become legends. A place where it's appropriate to run 18 kilometres through vineyards wearing a tutu and stopping at stations to replenish with wine instead of water. It's a dream come true for winos looking to shake up their typical tasting.

This magical land is Oliver Osoyoos, approximately 5 hours east of Vancouver in the beautiful, sun-drenched Okanagan. The fifth annual Half-Corked Marathon Weekend May 22 to 24 attracted over 1,000 participants. They ran, walked and rambled their way through 18kms of sprawling vineyards, up sandy embankments and down weaving roads, sampling from 15 wineries along the way to the finish line.

Most were dressed in wine-inspired attire, from 50 Shades of Pinot Gris, Grapes Anatomy and The Walking Red zombies. The winner of the costume contest was a group who created some sort of roller-coaster contraption that they somehow managed to run in.



Costume winners: the roller coaster (Gord Wylie)

One couple dressed as a bride and groom *actually* got married before running the race and crossed the finish line two hours later holding hands as husband and wife.



Wedding before the race (Gord Wylie)

Members of the Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association certainly got it right when they decided to throw an event together that combines semi-athleticism and drinking wine on the go. The Half Corked Marathon has quickly become one of the most highly anticipated events in Canada. Only in its fifth year, tickets available to the general public are in such high demand that they require a lottery system.



Wine station (Amy Watkins)

The untimed marathon is for beginner, intermediate and advanced runners alike. It's not designed to set a personal best, but to marvel at the Okanagan landscape, with its rivers, farms, mountains, sand, gravel and grasslands, all which contribute to the region's world-class wine production.



Osoyoos landscape (Amy Watkins)

Each vineyard offered up tasters of their best and often most unique varietals. Culmina refreshed runners early on with their Rosé Pamplemousse (grapefruit) and Rustico Farm and Cellars spiced things up on the third stop with Hellbitch, a hot mix of Cabernet Franc and jalapeño.



Rustico offering spicy wine and sangria (Amy Watkins)

Church & State was a welcome sight approximately 6 kilometres into the run. Their vineyard offered views overlooking a stunning valley as you sipped Cuvée Blanc and Lost Inhibitions' blend. Their cheeky marketing also provided a good laugh, with labels like I'd Shave My Legs For You and Hashtag This Mother F*cker.



A Church & State label displayed on a t-shirt (Amy Watkins)

After crossing the finish line, runners were awarded a medal and a wine glass that they could promptly fill with samples from the 30 vendors on site. A box lunch was provided and live music filled the air while half-corked runners basked in the afternoon sun.

5 lessons from the Half-Corked Marathon

1. It's another use for that overpriced Halloween costume or an excuse to get creative and make your own. Tie a cape around your neck and come up with a fun wine-inspired superhero name. The ability to see double?
2. The more wine you drink, the more you forget the pain in your legs from trekking the 18km route. Plenty of the stops also offer food pairings with cuisine from local chefs.
3. They don't call it the "Napa of the North" for nothing. Hello quality wine *and* 30-degree weather! Wear plenty of sunscreen.
4. Prepping for this race requires serious training, like practicing how to run and drink wine at the same time. As they say, practice makes perfect so keep pouring.
5. You will be drinking wine at all times and it's totally acceptable! The night before the race all participants are invited to a pasta party. That's right. It may sound like a child's birthday, but this pasta party even has wine bottles circulating to ensure you are prepped for race day with plenty of carbs and Cab Sav.

Entrance to the half marathon is by lottery. Visit www.oliverosoyos.com for more information and plan in advance for the Half-Corked Marathon 2016!

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