

Iowa Wine Month

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SPEAKERS

Speaker 3, Christa Hartsook, Joe Hannan, Nicole Eilers

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- C** Christa Hartsook 00:15
Hello, and welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Our podcast covers the opportunities and challenges associated with rural life.
 - J** Joe Hannan 00:29
I am Joe Hannon, Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. With me today is Nicole Eilers, Marketing Director for the Iowa Wine Growers Association. Welcome, Nicole, and how are you doing today?
 - N** Nicole Eilers 00:43
I'm doing great. How are you?
 - J** Joe Hannan 00:46
I'm doing fine and wonderful. I'm glad that we are finally through freeze events.

N

Nicole Eilers 00:51

Yeah. Not quite warm enough for me yet, but we're getting there.

J

Joe Hannan 00:55

Yes, I'm more of the 80s, 90s, 100s, type of person? How about you you?

N

Nicole Eilers 00:59

100°? Oh my gosh, no. How about 70s and sunny?

J

Joe Hannan 01:03

70s, I'm still wearing long sleeves. That's still a little chilly for me. Nicole tell me a little bit about the Iowa Wine Growers Association, and what do you specifically do at the Association? Yeah, so the Iowa Wine Growers Association is a member-based organization of wineries, vineyards and industry partners. And this is not just within Iowa, we have members outside of the state as well. But it's mostly Iowa-based businesses. Our goal is to work with our members and help market Iowa wine, provide resources for our members via education, host workshops and events, we do a lot of legislative work on behalf of the industry. So we have a lobbyist we work with who is trying to help us make the best of what our situation is with wineries as far as what they can do with their licensing and all that stuff. So and what I do specifically with the Wine Growers Association, I am the Marketing Director, but I work with a lot of wineries and vineyards on a daily basis and kind of do a little bit of everything — managing our communications and marketing, obviously. But also we have a registered apprenticeship program and a lot of stuff going on to kind of oversee, and we have a board of directors that's from within the industry who makes the majority of the decisions. Great. And so basically anybody can be a member of the association, then?

N

Nicole Eilers 02:27

Yeah, so anybody can be a member, there's various levels, you can join in at whether you're a winery or vineyard or just an associate partnership, just you know, maybe you're a hobby grape grower or you just want to learn more about the industry. So our newsletters are pretty informative, and a lot of communications going out that relate to that sort of thing.



Joe Hannan 02:50

Cool, especially right now with everything that's going on in the world, I'm sure.



Nicole Eilers 02:53

Yeah.



Joe Hannan 02:54

So I wanted to really bring you on here today to talk about, well May is Iowa Wine Month. So what is Iowa Wine Month?



Nicole Eilers 03:02

Yeah, so we're really excited — May each year we celebrate Iowa Wine Month. From the association standpoint, we organize it in terms of you know, having the governor sign the official proclamation form. And lining up that date, obviously, this year, it didn't happen in person, which is kind of a bummer, because it's fun to get everybody up at the Capitol and take that photo and meet with the governor. But regardless, we're still celebrating, just in a different way this year. So we put out lots materials for our members to utilize however they choose whether it's graphics for their social channels, or videos that we made this year to promote. We have printed materials, so bottle tags, and shelf talkers, and posters and all sorts of fun stuff that we do kind of a fun theme with each year for Wine Month. And then we just highlight it on our social channels as well. And we feature different wineries and what they're doing and just kind of celebrate the fact that we have like 100 wineries in our state and close to 250 vineyards and making some really, really good wine and trying to get that message out to people.



Joe Hannan 04:12

It's a lot of marketing campaign, really then it's promoting our history, promoting ourselves, promoting our wineries and promoting that we do have some fantastic wines here for us to get right?



Nicole Eilers 04:28

Yes, and also, you know, I like to highlight our varietals to and try to get the names of those out there to consumers. You know, it would be a dream to have our grapes be a regular term that people use, like you know, the other wine so someone walks into a

grocery store and says I want to La Crescent Wine, that's not you know, and so we do a lot of focus on the different grape varieties that we're growing to. So just to kind of help create that consumer awareness.

J

Joe Hannan 04:56

Seems like we're definitely starting to make progress towards that varieties discussion too as, especially as the industry is maturing, and we're maturing, of what varieties are consistently being used across the state, would you agree with that?

N

Nicole Eilers 05:09

Absolutely. I mean, we saw a shift a few years, it was more than a few years back where everybody was planting one specific variety and five, six years later, they couldn't sell it, they had too much of it, it wasn't as desired, I guess, as they thought it might be. So there's some really cool new hybrids coming out that are making these just fantastic wines. It's so exciting, I think to see even in the next few years to see how these newer grapes will continue to be played around with by the winemakers and trying new things. It's very exciting.

J

Joe Hannan 05:43

It is, and there's so much characteristics that are picked up from different locations across the state.

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Nicole Eilers 05:48

Yeah.

J

Joe Hannan 05:49

Okay. So back on track here with Wine Month, how can wineries get involved? What do you ask them to do? How can they take advantage of Iowa Wine Month for their marketing campaigns and strategies?

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Nicole Eilers 06:00

Well, they're free to use any of the materials that we have available, they're available on our website, actually, to download. So we would encourage them to use those and customize them with their information. Or contact me and I'm happy to do that for them.

So that's one way and it's easy. And we have a whole factsheet — it's, I think eight or nine pages of all different sorts of fun facts about the industry, whether it's historical facts, or like economic impact figures for sales reporting data, just tons of facts that they can use to share with their customers. And then also, we usually, like I said, Go up to the Capitol and take a fun photo and show the proclamation form, but I have something fun coming up that I'm going to be sharing with wineries to virtually toast the Proclamation. So I'll be sending that out to our members here within the next couple of days. So that'll be kind of a fun little mid-month promotion. And then we send out a press release that we make available for wineries as well.



Joe Hannan 06:59

Virtual toast sounds cool. What can you tell me more about that?



Nicole Eilers 07:04

So I have the proclamation form, it was sent to me in the mail. And what I would like to do is get as many wineries as I can and their staff to send me a photo that I'll Photoshop in the proclamation for them and everybody cheersing, and we'll do it on a certain date and time and then we'll just kind of flood social media with this Iowa Wine Cheers.



Joe Hannan 07:27

Oh, cool. Very fun.



Nicole Eilers 07:29

Yeah.



Joe Hannan 07:29

Making the best of the situation.



Nicole Eilers 07:31

Right?



Joe Hannan 07:32

Yeah. So you mentioned your website, and what is your website?

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Nicole Eilers 07:37

So our website is iowawinegrowers.org. And actually, we're making a shift to focus on more kind of consumer information. So you can also use the URL drinkiowawine.com.

J

Joe Hannan 07:52

All right, and they can find the fact sheet on the Iowa Wine Growers website?

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Nicole Eilers 07:57

Yes, under member content.

J

Joe Hannan 07:59

Alright, so one month. Sounds fun. Sounds like you have a great plan here in light of everything that's going on. Which brings up a good, good question is, how can I take advantage as a consumer of Iowa Wine Month? How do I buy our wine right now? Where do I go? What do I do? Can I get them from the wineries, things like that?

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Nicole Eilers 08:19

Yeah, so these wineries, this is their business, this is their livelihood, and to be shut down is just, it's devastating. And it's really hit close to home to work with these wineries. And I'm just so impressed about how they've evolved. Most wineries have gone to curbside pickup, where you can either call them or even some are taking text messages for orders, but you'll get your order to them ahead of time and you literally just pull up they will bring it out to you and the payment is handled online or virtually. So there's no contact there. It makes it super easy to grab their wines, take it home and enjoy. A lot of them have done local deliveries, which I think is fantastic. It's above and beyond to get their wines out to you and most of them have done that for free. And we also have a lot of them online and they use Vinoshipper and Vinoshipper is just a platform to order all sorts of wine, but they were so kind to work with us to create an Iowa Wine section of their website and I can get that to Joe, but that has all Iowa Wine facts available through being a shipper where you can literally search for hundreds of wines. Or if you have a favorite winery, just go to their website or contact them and they will most likely ship directly to you. I know that with things kind of reopening here in Iowa and some have opened depending on whether they're serving food or whatnot, or to just enjoy out on the patio, social distancing of

course and just the response from wineries has just been like I said, very impressive how they've navigated this. As a Association, from our standpoint, we have guided conference calls. We were doing those weekly when it was at the height of the crisis, and just to try to guide them through, you know what they can do, what they can't do, how they should be doing it, we really tried to provide them with a good set of guidelines. So hopefully that was helpful. But I know I personally have placed orders from several wineries and that's how I've been surviving this pandemic is a probably drinking a little bit too much Iowa wine, but I'm not complaining about it, because it's so good. So

J Joe Hannan 10:24
Well, it's not like you can drive anywhere. So,

N Nicole Eilers 10:26
Right?

J Joe Hannan 10:26
Yep, enjoy it at home. Okay, so one last question I got to ask you here before I let you go today, I keep hearing about these virtual tastings. What are the virtual tasting and have you participated in one yet?

N Nicole Eilers 10:38
These are so cool, I think they should just be a thing, regardless of where we're at with social distancing and the pandemic. But basically, what it is is, and I think it's just so cool to be able to get in front of a winemaker and hear their thoughts. But what it typically entails is, you would have that wineries' winemaker and maybe a couple other other staff, or maybe not maybe just a winemaker, and they go through, and I've seen it done a lot of different ways, but most of the time they have they pick a couple different wines, or maybe just focus on one. And they will go through the whole entire process as if they were sitting there in their tasting room, or maybe in your kitchen guiding you through, you know how to properly open the wine bottle and steps that you go through to sniff and look at the color, and the flavors, and the aromas. It's so, so cool. And the cool thing about it too, is that a lot of wineries are offering these like package deals, where each week they'll do a different set of wines. And you can pick up those wines and go through it with them. So you have the bottle of wine that they are also drinking and you can participate, usually, if it's either Facebook Live or Zoom or something like that. You can participate with them and ask questions and it's kind of on a more intimate basis, then you may get a chance to

otherwise. So it's a really cool thing that I positive thing that I think came out of this whole situation. When else would you have a chance to sit down and visit with the winemaker. So I think it's really cool.

J

Joe Hannan 12:07

Well not only that, but now it's an opportunity to participate in taste wines, not just that are right in your backyard, but from across the state, which I think opens up a lot of opportunities. And if you have family and friends from across the state now you can all get together and do the same virtual tasting. I need to do one of these really soon here. I think.

N

Nicole Eilers 12:29

Well, if you want to do one I know Soldier Creek was theirs on Fridays, and Walker Homestead does theirs on Saturdays. Those are the first ones that popped to the top of my mind. But it's just such a cool thing. Like I said, regardless of where we're at, I think they should totally continue because there are a lot of fun. Even if you don't didn't get a chance to order their wines. You could still participate. Go through it. And then order their wines afterward and try it later.

J

Joe Hannan 12:52

Well, that works too. All right, Nicole, I think we're about out of time. I really thank you for coming on and talking to me today, not just about Iowa Wine Month, but about this whole new world that we're living in right now.

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Nicole Eilers 13:03

Thank you so much Joe for having me on as well. And I would encourage everybody to pick up a bottle Iowa wine, whether it's curbside pickup, delivery, or shipped to you and cheers to Iowa Wine Month.

J

Joe Hannan 13:16

And of course you can reach Nicole at iowawinegrowers.org. If you have any additional questions or follow up that you'd like to do with her. I'd also like to thank Christa Hartsook and Olivia Hanlon from the Small Farms team for editing and helping produce these podcasts. So thanks for listening and until next time take care.



Speaker 3 13:38

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