Wine East®

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On the Cover: The entrance to Ray-Len Vineyards in Mocksville, North Carolina. (Photo by Hudson Cattell)

Passing the Buck

Mike White, extension viticulture specialist at Iowa State University, is responsible for their newsletter. In the May 9, 2008, issue of Wine Grower News (#42), he introduced readers to his editorial board and ran their picture (Millie is on the left and Isabelle on the right).

“Our editorial board believes in very close supervision. They watch my every move as I type up Wine Grower News in my home office. Not a word or movement ever gets by them.

“Proofreading is their main task. Blame them when you find spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes in this newsletter!”

We told Mike that sometimes it would be nice if we had an editorial board. In a moment of real generosity, he offered to loan them out!
The Iowa Boom Includes Wine

by Michael L. White and Murli R. Dharmadhikari

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Things are booming in Iowa. Iowa currently ranks #1 in hog production, #1 in corn production, #1 in soybean production, #1 in egg production, #1 in ethanol production, and #2 in biodiesel production. The total value of Iowa’s agriculture exports is over $4 billion, second only to California. But this is not the whole story. Things are also booming in Iowa’s grape and wine industry (1, 3). The number of federal licensed wineries has gone from 13 in 2000 to 62 at the end of 2007. Iowa now ranks #14 in the nation for the number of wineries.

This trend is not new only in Iowa. Nationwide, wineries are popping up in all 50 states. The February, 2008, issue of Wine Business Monthly reported that there were 6,011 wineries in the United States as of November, 2007, up from 4,700 in November, 2004. For the first time since records have been kept, 51% of these wineries are now located outside of California. Times are certainly changing, and locally produced quality wines are becoming commonplace (3).

Iowa is Not New to Grape Production

So what has happened in Iowa? Iowa has a strong history of grape production. Iowa was rated 11th in grape production in 1899 and rose to 6th place in 1919 when 12 million pounds of grapes were produced. Approximately a third of this was being produced around Cedar Rapids, Des Moines and Council Bluffs. Concord was the primary variety being grown and much of

Figure 1: The growth of Iowa's commercial vineyards and licensed wineries.
this production was shipped to other states. The 1900 United States Agriculture census of agriculture reported Iowa producing 7.4 million pounds of grapes and 76,301 gallons of wine. Iowa gradually relinquished its rank in grape production as competition from other states like California, Arkansas, Michigan and other countries moved into the market (4).

There were three deadly blows that killed the Iowa grape industry in the 20th century. First came the ratification of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution on January 16, 1919, and enacted one year later on January 17, 1920. It was finally repealed by the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933, and to this day remains the only constitutional amendment to be repealed in its entirety. Second came the Armistice Day Blizzard on November 11, 1940. A severe low pressure centered over Iowa caused the 60°F daytime temperature to drop quickly over 50 degrees. Snowfalls up to 27 inches with 50-80 mph winds covered a region encompassing South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. This drastic weather change killed most of the vineyards and orchards in this area.

Third, and very important was the introduction of the highly volatile 2,4-D broadleaf herbicide in 1944. Grapes are very intolerant to 2,4-D and this highly volatile formulation would vaporize after application and move long distances. By 1949, 2,4-D was being commonly used to control broadleaf weeds in corn, pastures and fence lines all through the Midwest.

The Resurgence

The resurgence of the Iowa wine industry really did not come about until January of 2000. At that time there were 13 wineries in Iowa, 11
of which were boutique type fruit wineries located in the Amana colonies. Located in the center of the state just north of Interstate 80, the Amana colonies are the #1 tourist attraction in Iowa. The other two wineries, Summerfield Winery at Indianola and Tabor Family Winery at Baldwin were estate wineries with established vineyards. Ron Mark, owner of Summerfield Winery, Paul Tabor, owner of Tabor Family Winery and Dr. Bill Brown of Timber Hill Winery in Leon formed a consortium to move the industry forward. These three godfathers of the Iowa wine industry formed the Iowa Grape Growers Association in January, 2000, and were able to get the Iowa legislature to form the Iowa Grape & Wine Development Commission within the Iowa Department of Agriculture in February, 2002.

**Snapshot of Iowa's Recent Grape Industry**

January, 2000 – Iowa Grape Growers Association established

April, 2001 – Iowa State University Viticulture homepage established

May, 2001 – Iowa Grape & Wine Development Commission established

January, 2004 – Iowa Grape Growers Association changes its name to Iowa Wine Growers Association

August, 2004 – Iowa Wine Trail (Iowa's first) is established

June, 2005 – Iowa State University hires Dr. Murli Dharmadhikari as State Extension Enologist

September, 2005 – First Iowa wine festival held in Indianola with approximately 1,000 people attending.

September, 2006 – Midwest Grape & Wine Industry Institute established at Iowa State University with Dr. Murli Dharmadhikari as Director

September, 2007 – Iowa State University Wine Quality Enology lab opens to commercial winemakers.
Long Range Plan Spurred Sustained Growth

The dramatic growth of the Iowa wine and wine industry did not just happen. This sustained growth was the result of a 10-year plan that was started by the Iowa Wine Growers Association in cooperation with Iowa State University Extension in 2003. All the players in this industry were invited to several meetings to help develop this long range plan. These included people from government, education, legislators, regulators, vineyards, wineries and retailers. The Iowa Wine Growers Association also employed a lobbyist to keep legislators informed of needs and successes.

The Iowa Wine Growers Association was organized in 2000. The three primary activities of this organization are to: 1) act as the Iowa vineyard and winery communication center; 2) lobby for favorable state legislation; and 3) to provide statewide education via a webpage, quarterly newsletter and annual conference in late winter. Since its inception, four other local Iowa regional organizations have been formed to offer local networking and group purchasing activities. These organizations include the Mississippi Valley Grape Growers Association in northeast Iowa; the Western Iowa Grape Growers Association; the Northwest Iowa Grape Growers Association, the smallest and newest regional organization; and the Scenic Rivers Grape Growers Association which covers southeast Iowa and parts of western Illinois and northeast Missouri.

Tourism, Events and Wine Trails

The Iowa wine industry is closely associated with tourism and events.
Many of our wineries have become event centers that replace the local Odd Fellows Hall or Methodist church basements. Weddings, receptions, birthdays, and many other social activities are being held at these wineries. The Iowa Wine Trail located in northeast Iowa, was Iowa’s first and was formed in November of 2004. Iowa now has five official wine trails: Iowa Wine Trail, Scenic Rivers Wine Trail, Western Iowa Wine Trail, Loess Hills Flat River Wine Trail, and Heart of Iowa Wine Trail. All five of these wine trails and all of Iowa’s wineries that are open for business can be found on the Iowa Wine and Beer Promotion Board’s homepage, www.iowawineandbeer.com.

New Cultivars Make the Wine
Iowa would not be part of the wine industry emerging in the upper Midwest if it were not for the new hybrid grape cultivars that have become available through the University of Minnesota and Cornell University over the last decade. Of special importance was Elmer Swenson, a private breeder who was hired by the University of Minnesota in 1972. Elmer breathed new life into the University’s grape breeding program by adding many of his selections to their program. Elmer Swenson passed away in December, 2004, at the age of 91.

We would not have a wine grape industry in Iowa if it were not for these cold hardy and disease resistant cultivars. Grapes planted in Iowa need to be able to resist cold winter temperatures of -15 to -25°F (see Table 1). Based on acreage, the top five wine grape cultivars planted in Iowa in order of precedence would be Maréchal Foch, Edelweiss, Frontenac, Lacrosse and St. Croix (5).

Viticulture Research and Education
Iowa has established a diverse and very qualified group to deliver the research and education needed to help this new industry. Dr. Gail Nornecke and Dr. Paul Domoto are leading the viticulture research efforts at Iowa State University. They currently are operating research vineyards on four outlying research farms involving sustainable viticulture, organic viticulture and cultivar response to different management techniques. Dr. Nornecke devotes most of her time to teaching and research. Dr. Domoto is involved with research and extension programming. Mike White, Iowa State
University Extension Viticulture Specialist, has been working with grape growers for more than eight years. Dr. Jean Gerrath, biologist at the University of Northern Iowa has established a Grapevine Identification and Certification Center using both a morphological and DNA fingerprinting approach to certify the identity of different grape varieties. Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) are both now offering degrees and certification programs in both viticulture and enology with an emphasis on online Internet teaching approaches.

**Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute**

On September 27, 2006, the Board of Regents approved the establishment of the Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute in the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University. The purpose of the Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute is to provide excellence in viticulture and enology research, teaching and extension education to support the development of the Midwest’s growing grape and wine industry. A summary of the Institute’s projects follows.

**A. Research**

**Viticulture**

- A wine grape cultivar trial was established in 2003 to evaluate the adaptability, productivity, and winemaking quality of 20 new cultivars and advanced selections at four locations in Iowa.
- Future research will focus on developing the best vineyard management practices for Iowa. The research will address topics such as rootstock, vine nutrition, canopy management, water management and IPM.
- Another area of research focus will be the application of grape genomics and precision viticulture to improve the fruit/wine quality of cold hardy grapes.

**Enology**

- Rapid determination of trans-resveratrol in red wine by SPME with

(Continued on page 53)
understanding their relationship with grape composition, and linking this information to consumer preference data. Studies will also be conducted on pigments and the tannin of cold hardy grapes and their relation to wine quality.

B. Education:
- Currently the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition in collaboration with the Department of Horticulture is offering a three-credit introductory course in Grape and Wine Science.
- Future plans calls for a degree program in Food Science with specialization in enology and another in horticulture with specialization in viticulture.

C. Extension education/services:
- Iowa State University Extension plays a major role in supporting all the activities of the Institute. As a part of outreach education, many short courses, workshops, industry meetings and demonstrations are organized to provide technical information to grape and wine industry members.
- Additionally, the Institute provides wine diagnostic service and mobile technical services to grape growers and wine producers.
- A well-equipped wine laboratory has also been established. This lab will be involved in managing the wine quality certification program which is currently being developed.

The Future of Iowa’s Wine Industry
Records from the Iowa Alcohol Beverage Division showed that Iowa wineries ended 2007 with 168,000 gallons in sales and 267,000 gallons of production. The larger production figure reflects the optimism of continually increasing sales and new wineries coming on board. Total wine sales in Iowa reached approximately 3.6 million gallons in 2007 representing an adult per capita consumption of 1.7 gallons per year (6). Most Iowans consider this as a glass half full scenario because Iowa’s per capita consumption is about half that of the national average.

Literature Cited
(2) Iowa Department of Agriculture — “Quick Facts About Iowa Agriculture”: www.agriculture.state.ia.us/agfacts.htm
(3) Wine Business Monthly: www.winebusinessmonthly.com
(4) Grape Expectations — A Food System Perspective on Redeveloping the Iowa Grape Industry by Rich Ping, ISU Leopold Center: www.leopoldiastate.edu/pubs/staff/grapes/Grape.pdf
(5) USDA/Iowa Ag Statistics 2006 Vineyard Survey: www.agriculture.state.ia.us/horticulture/News/06Vineyard.pdf
(6) Iowa Data Center: www.data.iowadatacentr.org/browse/state.html

Further information may be obtained from the following sources:
Iowa’s Wineries and Wine Trails: www.iowawineandbeer.com
Iowa Wine Growers Association: www.iowawinegrowers.com
ISU Viticulture Home page: www.viticulture.hort.iastate.edu/home.html
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GRAPE PRESSES FOR SALE

We are upgrading equipment and have two nice hydraulic presses for sale. Both have tilt frames, automatic adjustable pressure switches to control press cycle and nylon press aids. Both purchased new by us.

Model 60 SS basket, about 60 gallons, 3 years old, single phase 220v: $5,500. Model 70, wood basket, about 90 gallons, 2 years old, 110v: $4,800. See pictures at www.AntlerRidgeWinery.com. Contact Steve at (610) 730-0501 or e-mail AntlerRidge@epix.net.