

Grape Times



APRIL 2007

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

KEEL AND CURLEY WINERY

Newest Florida Farm Winery

(Seventh in a series on Florida Farm Wineries)

Keel Farms is a 25 acre blueberry farm in Plant City, with an additional 10 acres in Keesville.



Brand new sign just outside the tasting room

Joe Keel has been growing blueberries for nine years. He asked himself what do you do with fruit you can't sell because it is not pretty or does not meet standards? The answer at that time was you throw it away. Joe Keel decided that there was a better way to deal with the blueberries that he was putting in the dumpster and the idea of a winery was born in 2003.

He met Chase Marden, a winemaker from Vermont, and together produced and distributed wines to stores in the Tampa Bay area. Now in its third year Keel and Curley Winery produces 100,000 bottles of wine.

As the business grew, Joe was developing plans for a spacious wine tasting room and gift store. While these plans were being implemented, temporary housing was setup in a mobile trailer, which is now the office. Wine production and storage was taking place in an old building in the middle of the blueberry farm. Then disaster struck. On August 6, 2006 lightning struck the old warehouse and fire destroyed most of the building taking with it 27,000 bottles of wine plus blueberry packing machines and other heavy equipment. Two months after the fire a new production facility was complete.

After a long uphill trip through the permitting and zoning process the 4000 square foot tasting room and gift shop was finally opened in the new building in March 2007.

In back of the tasting room is a 4000 square foot deck overlooking a small pond. It is a place for patrons to sip their wine and enjoy nature. It will also be used for weddings, band concerts and catered events.

Sixteen different wines are produced at the winery. Three styles of Blueberry wine are offered, sweet semisweet and dry. Apple, Strawberry, Black Raspberry Key West-Key Lime and Mango

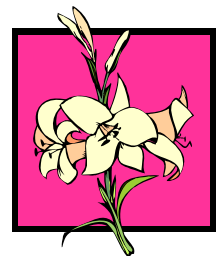
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- April 28-29, 2007
Blues at the Winery
10:00AM -5:00PM Sat.
11:00AM -5:00PM Sun.
\$2.00 Admission
Lakeridge Winery
- May 12-13, 2007
Jazz on the Vineyard Green
10:00AM -5:00PM Sat.
11:00AM -5:00PM Sun.
\$2.00 Admission
Lakeridge Winery
- May 23, 2007
Grape Grower Field Day
Free Admission
FAMU
- August 25, 2007
Grape Harvest Festival
FAMU



Presidents Message

Donnie R. Nettles

For the hobbyist grape grower and winemaker you should have already pruned your grapevines by now. It is time to start using Round-Up to eliminate the weeds and grass growing around your vines. Also, you can start feeding the vines about 1 cup per month of 6-6-6 or 8-8-8 fertilizer. Remember to apply the fertilizer at the same time every month or at least within a day or two. Most varieties by this time, should have some foliage starting to break through. You should be giving the vines about 1" of water every two weeks either through natural rainfall or by irrigation. You might consider putting a rain gauge out so you can keep an eye on the amount of rainfall that you are getting in your area. Start a spray program at intervals of every 10 to 14 days when the new shoots get about 3 to 4 inches long to keep the insects at bay and preventative maintenance for disease control. Check with your local Cooperative Extension agent for the type of pesticides and chemicals to use.

If any FGGA members have friends or neighbors that are growing grapevines or are amateur winemakers, please encourage them to join our organization. Let them know that the Florida Grape Growers Association is an organization you can join to learn more about the grape growing industry here in Florida. They can contact Susan Goolsby @ 386-329-0318 to become a member or they can find the membership application on line at www.FGGA.org. Newcomers are always welcome.

Blueberry Bash Henscratch Farms

Saturday, May 19th, 2007

8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Toes will be tappin' as three of Florida's best bluegrass bands take the stage for an entire day of entertainment. But to make things even more exciting they will be featuring 3 quartets from the Sunshine District of the Barbershop Harmony Society under a separate tent! Tour the winery and spend the day sippin blueberry wine. But who can forget the blueberry pancakes, blueberry syrup and blueberry whipped cream and sizzlin'



sausage?

They'll have plenty of fresh berries, pies, short-cakes and even blueberry salsa for sale .

The expanded craft fair will feature vendors from throughout the state, everything from veggies to glass works.



You may visit the many unusual food vendors from homemade BBQ to roasted almonds . Plan to spend the entire day at this won-

(Continued on page 3)

Grape Times April, 2007

EDITOR and PUBLISHER

Bob Paulish

Questions? Contact Susan Goolsby

386-329-0318 or admin@fgga.org

Wine is the "...healthiest and most health-giving of drinks."

--Louis Pasteur

(Continued from page 2) **Blueberry Bash**

derful family event (feed the hens too).

**Gates open 8am Admission is \$6 Adults Kids Free .
Breakfast AYCE is \$6**



The Blueberry Patch comes to life each spring. Bumble bees are hard at work pollinating the bushes. The sweet plump fruit stains your tongue, so be careful at the checkout station.

Wine Shipping Regulations in Florida

Here we go again.

Last spring the Florida House approved a measure to allow direct shipping of wine to consumers. It died in the Senate and as a result direct shipping continued with minimal regulation. According to statistics maintained by the state about 10,000 cases were ordered through direct shipping between February and June of last year.

Enter the Florida alcohol distributors and retailers. They are sponsoring a bill SB0126 (Saunders) that would prohibit wineries that produce more than 250,000 gallons of wine a year from shipping directly to consumers. The bill's supporters contend that tightly regulated wine shipping will ensure that the practice will not spread to beer and liquor which would undermine the existing three tier system that is easy to monitor and regulate.

"I don't think Florida or any other state, is ready to allow unlimited mail-order sales of alcoholic products," said John Fleming, a spokesman for the Florida Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking. The organizations members include Miami-based Southern Wine and Spirits, the country's largest wine and spirit distributor, as well as a host of business, law-enforcement, and religious groups. Southern Wine and Spirits contributed more than \$400,000 to Florida political parties, committees, and candidates during the 2006 election year.

On the other side of the aisle, led by California wineries, who see direct shipping of wine to the second largest

wine market as a new way to sell their products, view the distributors push of the bill as an effort to protect the in-state liquor industry. The 250,000 cap "serves no purpose other than to...benefit the wholesalers and protect their profits," said Hunter Limbaugh, a lobbyist for the Wine Institute, which represents more than 1,000 wineries. Currently no Florida wineries produce more than 250,000 gallons a year, meaning the cap would apply only to out-of-state wineries.

The Senate measure includes several new requirements for direct shipping. Wineries would pay a \$250 annual license fee and could not ship more than 12 cases a year to a single household. A provision has been included to eliminate Florida Farm Wineries from obtaining a distributors license. Wineries holding a distributors license would be grandfathered. Current statute prohibits a manufacturer of wines from obtaining a distributors license. Florida Farm Wineries are exempt from this provision. This is just another instance of Florida wholesalers stifling a fledgling industry in the name of greed. It does not benefit the consumer and hopefully the Florida Legislature will see through this rouse.

A House Bill HB1217 is similar to the Senate Bill without the 250,000 gallon cap. Rep. Elynn Bogdanoff, the Bill's sponsor said she does not support the cap this year, even though she did last year. Since then, she said the claims that unfettered direct shipping would lead to underage drinking problems haven't materialized. "The parade of horrors didn't happen," she said.

The FireFly Story

In April 2006, South Carolina introduced an ultimately unique product to the nation - FireFly, the Low country's first official and only vodka and world's only muscadine wine flavored vodka. FireFly is now available in South Carolina and Georgia.

The idea of the vodka came from Scott Newitt of Coastal Wine. "FireFly falls into the premium vodka category, and it will soon become one of the most fashionable and popular spirits in South Carolina," says Newitt, "This spring, expect FireFly to become the most called for spirit in cocktails in Charleston. Firefly is born on Wadmalaw Island. The grapes are



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(Continued from page 3) **Firefly**

grown, hand harvested, and made into wine. The wine is then sent to the distillery in Lake Alfred, Florida, and a small amount is infused with the best five times distilled vodka, the finest vodka. The infusion of the wine with the vodka makes the customary heat associated with vodka fly away, and it is also the secret behind FireFly's original taste and smoothness of the spirit. The infusion makes the "FIRE—FLY" away and creates a truly "Southern Flavored Sipping Vodka."

"We're honored to be introducing another South Carolinian product," says Jim Irvin, "The launch of FireFly is a another "first" for not only the Low country, but for the entire state."

As the region's first vodka, Newitt and Irvin, hope to establish and expand FireFly as the vodka of the Southeast, and more importantly, help South Carolina's beverage industry grow, producing more South Carolina products that will not only be enjoyed by locals, but by others in other parts of the Southeastern region as well.

Local artist Kevin Curran designed FireFly's logo. Curran's inspiration for the logo came from his own childhood memories of catching fireflies. The logo's dark blue background with the palmetto moon was inspired by Low country nights on the coastal waterways. Alum of the School of Visual Arts in New York City, Curran paints portraits and landscapes, as well as runs a graphic design and illustration studio in Charleston. He owns Curran Gallery on 12 Exchange Street in the historic district. For more information on Curran, visit www.currangallery.com



Grape Grower Field Day

FAMU
Wednesday May 23, 2007

Grape Harvest Festival

FAMU
Saturday August 25, 2007

(Continued from page 1) **Keel and Curley Winery**

Citrus Fusion are the fruit wines that are available. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Chardonnay are



Inside the new winery building

the traditional wines produced. Finally there are wines blended with fruit, Strawberry Riesling, Wild Berry Pinot Noir, Tangerine Tango Zinfandel, and Peach Chardonnay. The wines are prices from \$9.99 to \$18.99 and can be purchased at the store or online.



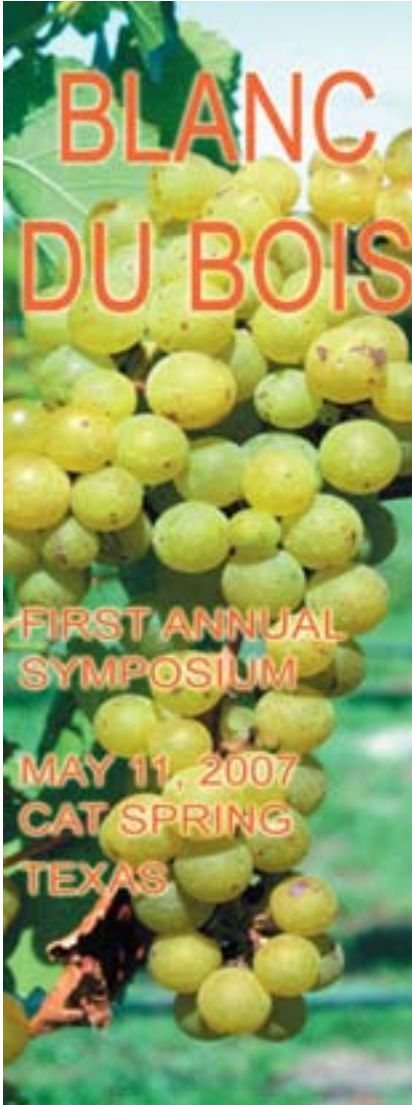
About a half an acre is planted with muscadines and the bunch grape Il Primo shown in the picture

Tasting room open:
Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sunday 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Keel and Curley Winery
5210 W. Thonotosassa Road
Plant City, FL 33565

(813) 752-9100

2007 Inaugural Blanc Du Bois Symposium



The Inaugural Blanc Du Bois Symposium will be held on May 11, 2007, at the Cat Spring Agricultural Society Hall in Cat Spring, Texas. The Blanc du Bois grape, first released for commercial production in 1986, has become a premier grape in wine production in the southern United States, from Virginia to Texas.

The goal of the Blanc du Bois Symposium is to educate growers, winemakers, and ultimately consumers on the merits of the Blanc du Bois grape as a major varietal that can produce award winning wines.

In this first year, the Symposium will concentrate on data about the Blanc du Bois grape and wines, with wineries and growers dis-

cussing the particulars of the grape and the many styles of wine that are being made from it. Presenters from Texas and other states will discuss growing conditions and production levels, wine making techniques as well as opportunities and challenges facing the industry. The Symposium will conclude with a roundtable discussion, followed by a wine tasting featuring Blanc Du Bois wines from throughout the States. All wineries and producers are invited to pour their Blanc du Bois.

Pre-registration is available through the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, Philip Shackelford, Austin County Agent, 979-865-5911, Extension 170. Cost for the one day symposium is \$35 pre-registration and \$50 at the door. If a

winery would like to participate in the pouring, contact Philip Shackelford at the above number or Vicki Parker, 409-924-1401.

Sponsors for the symposium are the Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Wine Society, Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association, and the Texas Cooperative Extension Service.

PROGRAM

8:00 to 9:00 am: REGISTRATION

VITICULTURE

9:00 to 9:10 am: BLANC DU BOIS: WHAT IS IT?

Dr. Douglas Rowlett

9:10 to 9:30 am: BLANC DU BOIS DISEASE PRESSURE,

Jim Kamas

9:30 to 10:00 am: BLANC DU BOIS, STATISTICAL DATA, Dr. Lisa Morano

10:00 to 10:45 am: GROWING BLANC DU BOIS IN AUSTIN COUNTY, TEXAS, Jerry Watson

10:45 to 11:30 am: GROWING BLANC DU BOIS IN EAST TEXAS, Scott Thompson

11:30am to 12:30pm: LUNCH

ENOLOGY

12:30 to 1:15pm: FLORIDA BLANC DU BOIS WINEMAKING PRACTICES, Jeannie Burgess, winemaker,

Lakeridge Winery

1:15 to 2:00pm: LOUISIANA BLANC DU BOIS

WINEMAKING PRACTICES, John Seago, winemaker,

Ponchartrain Vineyards

2:00 to 2:45pm: TEXAS BLANC DU BOIS WINEMAKING

PRACTICES Raymond Haak, winemaker,

Haak Vineyards & Winery

2:45-3:15 -- BREAK

3:15 to 4:00 pm: ROUNDTABLE Q & A SESSION

Panel Members

David Brinkman, Lost Creek Vineyard (Texas)

Jeanne Burgess, Lakeridge Winery (Florida)

Bob Cottle, Pleasant Hill Winery (Texas)

Raymond Haak, Haak Vineyards & Winery (Texas)

John Seago, Ponchartrain Vineyards (Louisiana)

Doug Rowlett, Paradox House Vineyards

Scott Thompson, St. Jane Vineyards (Texas)

Jerry Watson, Austin County Vineyards (Texas)

4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.: WINE TASTING OF COMMERCIAL

& NON-COMMERCIAL BLANC

DU BOIS WINES

A minimum of 3 Continuing Education Units will be given to Commercial, Non Commercial and Private pesticide applicators who attend this event.

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ASSOCIATION**

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BLANC DU BOIS PLANTS FOR SALE.

IF ANYONE ANTICIPATES A VINEYARD OR NEEDS ADDITIONAL PLANTS, LET US KNOW NOW. WE WILL BE STARTING NEW PLANTS IN MAY. EITHER CALL 386-659-2231 OR EMAIL jnlvineyard@yahoo.com

John Sirvent

**Florida Grape Growers Association, Inc
111 Yelvington Road
East Palatka, FL 32131**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED