

Grape Times



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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Chautauqua Vineyards and Winery One of Florida's Oldest Wineries

(Fifth in a series on Florida Farm Wineries)

Chautauqua Vineyards, one of the oldest wineries in Florida, is located just north of DeFuniak Springs, a small city of around 7,000 located off of Interstate 10 between Tallahassee and Pensacola. Florida's oldest library still in operation is located in DeFuniak Springs. Another point of interest is Lake DeFuniak, said to be one of only two perfectly round natural lakes in the world. Folklore has it that the lake was formed by a large meteor crashing to earth centuries ago. The circumference of the lake is 5,280 feet, which makes a almost perfect mile.

The name Chautauqua was chosen for the vineyards and winery because the community of DeFuniak Springs was the home of the Winter Assembly of the Chautauqua Assembly from Chautauqua County, New York from 1885 to 1928. The Indian word "Chautauqua" means "meeting place"

The vineyards and winery are owned by Paul and Kate Owens of Brewton, AL. The vineyard was planted with carlos and noble varieties of



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MARK YOUR CALENDER

- *January 18-19, 2007*
FGGA Annual Conference & Meeting
Hilton Hotel, Ocala
- **Jazz at the Winery**
Saturday September 23rd
10:00AM—5:00PM
Sunday September 24th
10:00AM—5:00PM
\$2 Admission
Lakeridge Winery

The Florida Viticulture Policy Act

The question has been asked why is there need for a viticulture policy? The Act itself declares why it was enacted. The opening statement of **599.001 Legislative declaration of public policy respecting viticulture** states "The Legislature declares that viticulture, the production and utilization of grapes, is an underdeveloped agricultural commodity enterprise in this state."

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Presidents Message

The signs are positive

At the May 2006 meeting of the VAC the Council submitted proposals for the 2006-2007 fiscal year totaling \$401.3K for approval of the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Of this amount \$309.5K were for research grants and \$91.8 were for promotion initiatives. In my short tenure on the Council I have seen the funds spent on viticultural and enological activities grow year after year. The growth of our industry is fueled by these funds. Research grants have created new and better varieties of grapes, improved winemaking techniques, and established better methods of growing grapes. Increased acreage, Harvest Festivals, Brochures and Winery Production software are just some of the promotion projects that are fueling the growth of our industry. We should be glad that the State of Florida considers viticulture to be an important part of the economy to provide funds to help our farms and wineries grow.

All of the signs point to a prosperous future. I am excited to be part of this business and looking forward to the developments that are coming down the road.

Best wishes for a bountiful harvest.

See you in the vineyard

Bob Paulish, FGGA President

Florida's Certified Farm Winery Program, 599.004 F.S.

Verifying Document Checklist

Verifying documents include but are not limited to:

1. Property deed (s) for 10 acres of Florida vineyard owned with fruit to be used for winemaking by the winery.
2. Vineyard management contract (s) and other management data for 10 acres of Florida vineyard managed for fruit to be used for winemaking by the winery.
3. Processing receipts or logs for owned or managed fruit and purchase receipts for tonnage purchased and gallonage purchased for winemaking, specifying amounts from Florida owned or managed vineyards where fruit is grown for winemaking.
4. Total tonnage purchased and gallonage purchased/produced for winemaking from others by geographic location. Notarized statement on company letterhead
5. Total bulk or finished wine purchased annually by geographic location. Notarized statement on company letterhead
6. Photographs of the product being grown on property managed or owned to be used in winemaking by the winery. Include map with address and directions to property
7. Photographs of signage showing the hours the winery is open and identifying location of said signage.
8. Other such documents the Department of Agriculture deems necessary to determine the winery complies with the requirements of the Florida Farm Winery Program to be certified and registered.

Grape Times August, 2006

EDITOR and PUBLISHER
Bob Paulish

Questions? Contact Susan Goolsby
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Viticulture Policy Act

In section 599.002 of the Act, the legislature established the Viticultural Advisory Council (VAC) administered by the Department of Agri-

“viticulture, the production and utilization of grapes”

culture and Consumers Services. The council consists of eight members including the President of the Florida Grape Growers Association or designee, representatives from UF IFAS, FAMU, and the State Agriculture Advisory Council. The other four members include a wine producer, a fresh fruit producer, a nonwine product (juice, jelly, pie fillings, etc.) producer, and a viticultural nursery operator. Members are appointed for a 2-year term by the Commissioner of Agriculture.

The primary responsibilities of the Viticulture Advisory Council are defined in 599.002. “to submit to the Commissioner of Agriculture, annually, the industry’s recommendations for viticultural research, promotion, and education and, as necessary, the industry’s recommendations for revisions to the State Viticulture Plan.”

Where are the funds coming from to pay for the research promotion and education programs recommended by the VAC? Section 599.012 (2) states “Fifty percent of the revenues collected from the excise taxes imposed under s. 564.06 on wine produced by manufacturers in this state from products grown in the state will be deposited in the Viticulture Trust Fund in accordance with that section.” It is important to note the phrase “products grown in the state”. This is meant to increase production of grapes in Florida benefiting local growers.

Since the funding of the Act comes from the state’s wineries, the Florida Farm Winery Program was included in the Act, establishing Florida Farm Wineries as a tourist attraction. This makes them eligible to have highway signs placed on interstates and major highways directing the public to their establishment. This is an extremely valuable advertising program, promoting our existing wineries and adding incentive to establish new wineries.

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Chautauqua Vineyards

muscadine in 1979. About 40 acres of grapes are in the ground. The winery opened it’s



In the background is the largest press of it’s kind this side of the Rockies.



Florida’s oldest library located in DeFuniak Springs

doors 10 years later in 1989. It is the second largest winery as far as the amount of grapes that are crushed and pressed which is about 150,000 gallons. To accomplish this task a Europress was purchased this year which has a capacity of up to 35 tons of crushed grapes. It is the largest press of it’s kind this side of the Rockies. The press, from setup to completion is able to press the wine or juice in about 4 hours and be ready to start the next batch. This years crush is expected to be about 1300 tons.

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Winery Fire Consumes Extensive Warehouse

By RAY REYES The Tampa Tribune

PLANT CITY - Winemaker Chase Marden rummaged through stacks of charred boxes to see whether any bottles of his dry blueberry or strawberry Riesling were salvageable after a fire Thursday night at the Keel & Curley Winery left a warehouse a heap of tinder and ashes.

"This is like a true nightmare," Marden said.

Hillsborough Fire Rescue investigators are determining the cause of the blaze. Joe Keel, owner of the winery west of Plant City at 5210 W. Thonotassassa Road, said he suspects lightning from a thunderstorm sparked the fire. A retired firefighter who lives nearby heard a loud explosion about 9 p.m., looked out his window and saw the warehouse engulfed in flames, Keel said.

A neighbor who lives west of the winery told Keel on Friday that she saw lightning strike the structure.

"It was definitely lightning," Keel said. "No doubt."

About 27,000 wine bottles were stored in a large walk-in cooler at the south end of the 6,000-square-foot warehouse, said Vickie Shearer, the winery's operations manager. The wine is valued at \$500,000, and Shearer said damage estimates might climb into the millions because a blueberry-packing machine and other heavy machinery also were stored in the warehouse. Custom furniture and wine glasses that were to adorn a new wine-tasting room also were destroyed.

"It will probably take a year to replace the inventory we lost," Keel said.

A Hillsborough fire station was just 200 yards away, but firefighters were responding to a downed power line when the blaze at the warehouse started, said Jeff Keel, brother of Joe Keel. By the time the firefighters arrived at the winery, the warehouse "was history," Joe Keel said.

Twisted scraps of vinyl siding and the burned husk of a forklift still smoked in the center of the ruins Friday morning. At the north end, employees created a small mountain of broken glass from wine that couldn't be saved. Only a section of the metal cooler was standing. Marden, the winemaker, retrieved one bottle from a scorched box. It was still cold and slick with a layer of condensation.

"This dry blueberry was going to be the best in the country," Marden said. "It was going to peak in six months. It was going to be incredible."

Joe Keel and Marden opened their winery in October 2003. Keel & Curley produces 14 varieties of wine, and 47 retailers in the Tampa Bay area carry the brand. Blueberries are grown and packed at the business, and Marden uses the fruit for three kinds of blueberry wine.

Despite the fire, the business remains open for daily wine tastings, Keel said.

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Chautauqua Vineyards

Not all of this production is turned into wine. Much of the juice is sold to outside sources and about 25,000 gallons is made



View of the retail store's tasting bar

into wine for sale in the retail store.

George Cowie the winemaker at Chautauqua makes 19 different varieties of wine, including 8 muscadine, 5 vinifera 3 fruit and 3 blends. Two of the wines are very unique. Vanilla Sherry is a muscadine wine with vanilla beans in the bottle as flavoring and Chocolate Port a muscadine wine with cocoa beans in the bottle. It took a lot of experimentation to determine the right type of beans would produce the best taste.

The winery prides itself on its quality control said George. Control is maintained from the time the grapes are picked, quickly processed and bottled. All products are sold from the retail store and tasting room. At one time some of the wines were distributed to stores through out the state. However, It became too costly having to deal with too many middlemen.

Summertime in Putnam

Kellie Thropp

Putnam County is breathing a sigh of relief now that harvest is behind us. It has been a busy season for us whether Putnam County growers have been harvesting commercially or selling to the public. The finale to the season was held on Labor Day weekend as John Sirvent hosted his annual winemaking seminar at both Log Cabin Farm & Vineyard and Sirvent's Farm for local wine enthusiasts. Each year brings a larger turnout from the community as well as increasing awareness of grape growing.

Dave and Ricky Dacasto have been successfully enjoying the fruits of their labor with Tangled Oaks Winery in Grandin. Upon visiting Tangled Oaks, you are welcomed by the oak trees surrounding the restored home turned winery. The oak trees hug the winery and visitors can walk through the scenic vineyard arranged behind the winery.

The winery has a unique touch as art for sale adorns the walls, provided by artists of the Putnam County Art League. In addition, Tangled Oaks has recently added a tasty Riesling to their list of wines. Of course, the muscadine wine is still of main interest!



Dave DeCasto showing his new winery sign

As summer slips away from us and the vineyard is quiet once again, we are enthusiastic about Dan Doran's vineyard being established. So far, Dan has planted over 10 acres of a combination of carlos and nobles and is not stopping yet! With the ever increasing interest in grape growing, other Putnam farmers are excited about the prospect of the grape growing industry and its potential in today's wine market. More acreage will turn to grapes as a



Tangled Oaks tasting room

crop in the near future within our county and we are ecstatic of the transformation due to a combined effort from all Putnam County Grape Grower members. As we say goodbye to summer and welcome



Carlos Harvest at Log Cabin Vineyard

the shifting winds of the fall, we will take this time to enjoy the serene vineyards that surround us-next year will be even better!

New Location of Florida Estates Winery

On Friday September 1, 2006, the second new location of Florida Estates Winery opened its doors to the public. On opening weekend, September 1-3rd, customers who stopped in anytime between the hours of 11am-6pm received a complimentary tasting on select wines of your choice. Florida Estates Winery St. Petersburg is located 1 mile west of I-275 at exit 25 (38th Avenue North) or 2 blocks east of US 19 at 3101 37th Avenue North in Pinellas County, just a few miles from downtown St. Petersburg and the beautiful beaches. This new location is housed in an old remodeled CSX train station from the 1960's that was renovated in 1997.

Open Daily 11:00am - 6:00pm

Land O'Lakes~ (813) 996-2113

Fax: (813) 995-0393

St. Petersburg~ (727) 526-2113

Fax: (727) 526-2112

FLORIDA GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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Annual Conference & Meeting to be held January 18—19, 2007 at the Hilton Hotel and Conference Center in Ocala Florida.

Board of Directors Meeting
October 6, 2006
 MREC Apopka, FL



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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

«First Name» «Last Name»
 «Address 1»
 «Address 2»
 «City», «State» «ZipCode»