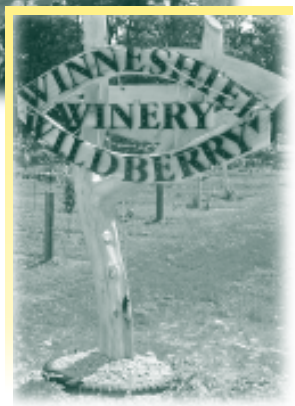
Vineyards of Winneshiek

Winneshiek Wildberry Winery & Vineyards

Ken and Yvonne Barnes of rural Decorah.

1 Mile East on 337th Street from North Winn. Road.



Winneshiek Wildberry Winery is a 140 year-old family farm owned and operated by three families; Ken and Yvonne Barnes, Darla and Keith Jones, and Beth and Julio Guzman, all of Decorah. Beth and Darla are the daughters of Ken & Yvonne. The farm has been in Yvonne's family for 140 years tracing back to her great-grandmother. The Barnes' have farmed for 37 of those years, but in 2001 Ken decided to plant grapes as a hobby rather than continuing their farming operation. Their daughter Darla became interested in home wine making and as they say, the rest is history. Ken's vision and dream came true when the winery was built by local Amish on the original foundation of the dairy barn and opened in October of 2005. There are now 3 ½ acres of grapes in the vineyards, 750 rhubarb plants, walking trails through the vineyards and a picturesque pond.

Amanda Wikan pours one of the wines for Melvin Molokken of West Union to sample. A variety of Iowa wines are for sale including Chambourcin, Edelweiss, Seyval Blanc, Red Raspberry, Concord, Blackberry and Rhubarb just to name a few. They have sold 2/3 of their wine from last year already. The average price is between $9-11 for each bottle and can also be purchased by the case or gift basket with Iowa cheeses or gourmet truffles.

Make plans to book your next special event at the winery. Outside on the patio or inside the spacious room with the oak bar, both make a perfect place to hold wedding rehearsals, business meetings or family reunions. Be sure to take a stroll through the gift shop and then downstairs to learn about the wine making process. All pieces in the gift shop are handmade by local crafters within the tri-state area.

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Ken and Yvonne not only spend their time working on their winery and vineyards, but for the past 20 years they have owned a separate wood picture frame business. If you are looking for a unique Christmas or birthday present, these picture frames will add character to walls. They can be purchased at the winery's gift shop along with many other craft items.

This essential tool, called a refractometer, helps determine when the grapes are ready for harvesting. It measures the sweetness and acidy levels in terms of 'brix'.

Franzen Vineyard

Josh and Kari Franzen of rural Decorah also find time in their busy lives to manage a vineyard as their hobby. They will market all the grapes this year to Winneshiek Wildberry Winery. Their 2-acre vineyard is four years-old.

To learn the step-by-step wine making process, visit Hawkeye's website at www.hawkeyerec.com and click on the News tab and the Member Profiles link.

Prairie View Vineyard

Brian and Kelly Nordschow of rural Decorah did their research. Before planting their 2 ½ acre vineyard in 2005, they spent many hours touring vineyards in Iowa, researching which variety of plants can 'weather' northeast Iowa winters, and Brian even enrolled in an online class to learn the best techniques for growing. They wanted to do it right the first time, and even though it was a large up-front investment, the Nordschow's will have a profitable vineyard for many years to come. The best planning in the world still has flaws. The first year, deer ate nearly 800 of the 1,000 newly planted vines. Now they have a 6' electric fence enclosing the Prairie View Vineyard.

The Nordschow's decided on planting just two varieties of grapes. There are 16 rows of LaCrescent vines that were developed by the University of Minnesota and will be grown specifically for white wines. Next year the grapes will be sold to Park Farms Vineyard and Winery in Dubuque. The other variety is a 'table grape' called Summerset. Look for these grapes in local grocery stores in the next couple of years.

Besides raising two children, Kensie and Brandon, Brian works at Decorah Implement and Kelly has her own interior design and consulting business **(www.transformationsbykelly.com)**. Where do they find time to tend to their vineyard? It all started with a vision and even the name took considerable planning. When you stand at the top of the vineyard, you can see the Washington Prairie Church steeple in the horizon. This is where they were married and so it only seemed fitting to name their vineyard after this special correlation.