

Small winery starts at the right time and place

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

SUNNY SLOPE, Idaho — Situated in a perfect place to grow wine grapes, Fujishin Family Cellars takes advantage of the unique high desert climate that produces some of the finest wine in the region.

The Snake River Valley AVA (in southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon) has the ideal combination of warm days and cool nights that creates superb grapes.

Martin Fujishin says this winery was part of a project that he and his fiancée, Teresa Moye, started in 2007 — the year they started making wine.

"I grew up in this area, on a family farm. Teresa and I met in 2006 and mutually fell in love with the wine business," he says.

"When I was growing up I farmed with my parents for a number of years and then started farming on my own. During that time I worked for Koenig Winery on weekends," he says. "I did sales for them, and was still working for them when I met Teresa, as assistant winemaker and cellar master."

Fujishin Family Cellars

In business: Since 2007

Owner: Martin Fujishin

Location: Sunny Slope, near Caldwell, Idaho

They got encouragement along the way.

"After I'd been working for them awhile they were kind enough to say that they thought it would be great for us to have our own winery. This was why we began our project," he says.

The Fujishin Family Cellars started out with a group of wineries in Caldwell and then moved out to the Sunny Slope area with the other wineries 5 years ago.

"We did one year in Caldwell with a little tasting room that we shared with two other wineries, then branched out on our own; we wanted to be out here in wine country," Fujishin says.

"It's been a really great experience, and basically a labor of love for myself and Teresa, and now her daughter Helena is also involved in the business. The three of us run it, with just a little part-time help to do the tast-

ing room," he says.

In the wine business, there are a lot of big corporate wineries, but "we are still a very small family-owned winery and specialize in the varieties that most people don't necessarily think of for the Northwest," he says.

They make wines such as Mourvedre, Petit Bordeaux, Petit Syrah and others that many wineries might shy away from because they are not the big name varieties.

"We tend to specialize in things that are a little bit different. Our other brand, Lost West Winery, is a side project in which we are actually doing varieties from other regions as well," he says.

Martin and Teresa are pleased to be part of the Idaho wine community.

"It's wonderful to be part of a small group of wineries who are very supportive of

one another. This is a great community in which to start a winery — and one of the few places in the world where you can actually still start a winery and have it not be horribly high-priced, and be acceptably competitive," he says. "We're still a group that is supportive of each other; we are 50 wineries against the world as opposed to 50 wineries against each other. That's unique and a lot of fun."



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From left, Teresa Moye and her daughter, Helena, are shown with Martin Fujishin at Fujishin Family Cellars in Sunny Slope, Idaho, near Caldwell.

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