

Oregon

New grape crushing facility opens doors in Medford

By CRAIG REED
For the Capital Press

MEDFORD, Ore. — There was ground available for a vineyard and a facility available for a winery so the decision to go into grape growing and crushing was easy for the Naumes family.

The family, one of the largest pear growers in Southern Oregon's Jackson County, has been in the orchard business for over 100 years. So while getting into the grape business diversified its operation, the transition wasn't too difficult.

In 2013, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Grenache grapes were planted on 60 acres, a site that had previously been an apple and pear orchard. Grapes were harvested off 15 acres of that ground this past fall.

The crush facility in north Medford was originally a pear packing plant, but the family had stopped packing there about 20 years ago when the business consolidated three packing houses into its present-day facility. A year-long project renovated it into Naumes Crush & Fermentation and began the process of turning grapes into wine in August.

"We recognized the rapid growth in the wine industry in Southern Oregon and that there would soon not be enough crush capacity for the region," said Laura Naumes, chief operating officer for Naumes Inc. "We had a background in the juice concentrate business and, although not exactly the same, there are a lot of similarities so we felt somewhat comfortable making the decision to enter the custom crush foray."

Medford has two other custom crush businesses: Pallet Wine Co. opened in 2009 and Barrel 42 opened in 2014. They were both reportedly booked to capacity last year.

Chris Graves was hired in May to be the winemaker at Naumes Crush. Graves is a graduate of the University of California at Davis Viticulture and Enology Program. He worked at several wineries in California for 10 years before moving north to the Medford area.

"This is nearly as good of a crush set up as you're going to get," Graves said of the equipment that was installed in the winery. "The places I worked in California didn't have the technology that we have here."

One piece of equipment is



Chris Graves, the winemaker at Naumes Crush & Fermentation in Medford, Ore., punches grapes in a tank at the facility in mid-October. Graves says the facility that opened in August processed about 150 tons of grapes this fall.

Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

an optical sorter that automatically selects the right grapes for the winemaking process. Graves also said the heating and cooling of the stainless steel tanks can be controlled, even remotely, giving him an edge in making better wines.

He added the facility also has a state-of-the-art laborato-

ry that is able to quickly and efficiently process and analyze a lot of samples, in turn helping to determine the best wines.

Naumes Crush processed about 150 tons of grapes from eight southwestern Oregon sources this fall. Graves said the facility easily has the po-

tential to process up to 500 tons of grapes.

"It was a good year with good grapes," the winemaker said of the 2015 crush. "Southern Oregon wines are getting better. It's neat to be a part of this movement."

Laura Naumes said she was pleased with the recent crush.

"We finished the facility on a Friday and were crushing the following Monday," she said. "We had very few, minor problems. The equipment ran smoothly, our cellar staff was incredible and our clients were a joy to work with. We look forward to at least doubling our crush next season."

ODP picks pot policy point person

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

Sunny Jones is the point person for all things cannabis at the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

After 10 years with the agency, the former pesticide investigator took a newly created position Nov. 16 designed to connect marijuana businesses and other agencies with the right information and sources at the agriculture department.

The agency has its hands in multiple stages of marijuana cultivation and production, from weights and measures to food safety. If you manufacture cannabis edibles, for instance, you need a food license from ODA. If you want to portion out marijuana for commerce, you need a licensed measuring device.

"We count it as one of the 250 different agricultural commodities produced by Oregon agriculture," said Bruce Pokarney, ODA's spokesman.

Due to agency overlap in regulation of marijuana, ODA needs open communication lines with other departments, including Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.

So, earlier this year, the department asked the Legislature for a dedicated position, a liaison of sorts, to coordinate cannabis policy, Pokarney said.

Her task include attending governmental meetings on cannabis and responding to marijuana business operators' inquiries about what the ODA requires of them, among other duties, Pokarney said.

Agri-Business Council changes its name

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

The Agri-Business Council of Oregon, which puts up crop identification signs along highways and introduces children to agriculture through its Adopt a Farmer program, is changing its

name to Oregon Aglink.

Executive Director Geoff Horning said the new name better reflects what's become the non-profit organization's primary focus: connecting rural producers and urban consumers.

"As Oregon's urban hubs and statewide population

continues to grow and attract newcomers, it's essential to continue to focus our communications on the importance of local ag to their daily lives, and to connect farmers and producers to those of us who rely on them." Horning said in a prepared statement.

Corp to take over as CBARC director

Funding maintained for federal ARS

By GEORGE PLAVEN
EO Media Group

In a surprise announcement Nov. 19, Valtcho Jeliakov — the man hired to replace Steve Petrie as director of Oregon State University's Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center — told growers he has resigned after one year on the job.

Mary Corp, regional administrator for OSU Extension Service, will take over the position starting Nov. 23. Corp will continue to head up university outreach in Umatilla, Morrow and Gilliam counties.

The news came as members of a liaison committee between farmers, CBARC and the federal Agricultural Research Service met at the Pendleton station for an open house and program updates. They were joined by Dan Arp, dean of the OSU College of Agricultural Science; Tom Shanower, associate area director of the ARS; and Blake Rowe, CEO of the



Mary Corp

Oregon Wheat Growers League.

Jeliakov discussed new developments at the station in 2015 before revealing he is stepping down as director to focus on his own research projects.

Jeliakov, a native of Bulgaria, joined CBARC in December 2014 after working as director for the University of Wyoming agricultural experiment station in Sheridan. However, Jeliakov said he wanted to free himself of administrative duties to advance what he described as "innovative" research.

"As agriculture intensifies towards high yields and quality, Agriculturalist will have to expand their concepts and appreciation of Balanced Nutrition" — Dr. Thomas Yamashita

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