

Holesinsky Winery grows in Magic Valley

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

Located 4 miles north of Buhl, Idaho, on the Snake River canyon rim, this winery was founded by James Holesinsky.

His father was a chemist and wanted James to be a chemist, but the son says he found his passion in a different sort of effort: winemaking. In 2001 James went to University of California-Davis and completed the wine program, then came back and planted 7 acres of grapes at his family's farm.

That was the beginning of the Holesinsky Vineyard and Winery.

The first planting of 1,000 Chardonnay grapevines was in 2001. In 2002 the vineyard grew with the addition of 3,000 Syrah vines, 2,000 Merlot, and 200 Port (Sauzao, Tiuta Cao, Touragia).

Growth continued in 2006 with 1,000 Cabernet Sauvignon and 1,000 Riesling vines.

Muscat was added in 2007.

With love for his product, dedication to his family and comprehension of wine quality, chemistry and farming, James Holesinsky became a winemaker.

"When someone buys my wine I want them to taste it and know that this is what wine is supposed to taste like," said Holesinsky.

Eric Smallwood came to the winery in January, focusing on growing their wine market.

"We just released our 2016 wine," said Smallwood. "We have a new Riesling and a new Rose (Cabernet franc) that have

been a big hit."

This year, at Savor Idaho — an annual fundraiser in Boise for the Idaho Wine Commission at the Idaho Botanical Gardens — Holesinsky Vineyard and Winery was among 32 wineries offering their wares.

The Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission hosted the wine and food event on June 11, featuring many Idaho wineries and restaurants.

Savor Idaho gives consumers a unique opportunity to savor the best Idaho has to offer in wine and food.

"Tickets are \$100 per person. Everyone gets a tasting glass so they can try all the wines and report their tastings. Each winery can bring up to three wines, and we were pleased because our new Rose made a big splash," said Smallwood. "People kept coming to our booth saying they'd heard other people talking about it and wanted to try it."

The winery utilizes direct marketing.

"We self-distribute," he said. "I am the marketing guy, sales guy, events guy, et cetera, focusing on south central Idaho. We are the farthest-east winery in Idaho, and the closest to Twin Falls, becoming established as the local winery for the Magic Valley."

Holesinsky wines are in many stores and restaurants in the Magic Valley and Boise.

"We participate in as many events as we can. Many people find us on Facebook," he said.

The tasting room at the winery is open by appointment only.

"We try to get groups of four or more and find a time

that works for everyone. People enjoy the scenic setting and view from the canyon rim," said Smallwood.

"We are planting more grapes, including some at a golf course in Filer, Idaho. We also have grapes at Hagerman; those vineyards are growing grapes for us."

They also released a unique bottle of wine — called Blackout — for this summer's solar eclipse.

"These bottles are screen printed at Boise," he said. They sold the wine along the path of the total eclipse.

"It will be a souvenir for people to take home with them," said Smallwood.

He became interested in winemaking many years ago.

"James and I grew up together and went to high school together. I moved back to Idaho after a decade gone, and James thought I'd be a good fit for the winery," he said. "He's still the winemaker but I am currently learning to be the winemaker, while taking care of many other things that need to be done."

"We are kicking butt and taking names, gearing up for future business," Smallwood said.

The Idaho wine industry has boomed in recent years; there are now 58 wineries in the state.

"Many grapes are grown here now, and thankfully our grapes survived the winter," he said.

"Wineries in the Nampa-Sunnyslope area really got hammered," he said. "We were lucky and all our grapes came through it, so we are counting our blessings."

"This winter put them to the test."



Heather Thomas/For the Capital Press

From left, James Holesinsky, Caitlin Holesinsky and Eric Smallwood. Holesinsky Vineyard and Winery is in Buhl, Idaho.



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