

Cabalo's Orchard: Tree fruit, cider and U-pick

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

KUNA, Idaho — Cabalo's Orchard was first planted in 1986.

Chan and Cathy Cabalo took over the orchard from her father in 2004 and transitioned it to organic production.

"We follow organic practices; all the inputs we use are certified organic," Cathy said.

Today, the small orchard has a lot of variety to offer its customers.

The older apple varieties include Red and Golden Delicious, Royal Gala, Criterion and Jonathan. The Cabalos added Pacific Gala, Gravenstein, Jonagold, Honeycrisp, Braeburn, Granny Smith, Macintosh and Winesap.

In addition to the apples, they planted cherries, apricots, prunes, plums, several varieties of pears, and raspberry and blackberry patches.

The cherries are generally ready to pick by early July, and this starts the season, which goes into October.



Cathy Cabalo speaks with school students during an outing at her orchard.

Cabalo's Orchard

Travelers often buy fruit at their roadside stand. They also have a pumpkin patch, which is open to the public in October.

Boxes of fruit are available for purchase, but the primary focus is U-pick. Some fruit is also sold through Idaho's Bounty — an online co-op.

Another product they offer is

fresh apple cider.

"This is something we started 10 years ago, selling direct to the public. Our cider season starts in early September," Cathy said.

The first apples are ripe by mid-August, and cider is a good way to use any extras.

For a while they partnered with another family that had a large

antique cider press and customers enjoyed watching the process.

"We only did that a few years, however, because we needed a team of people to run it," she said. "We purchased a new stainless steel cider press a few years ago and continue to make a lot of cider."

In addition, they renovated their store and are expanding it.

People from around the region enjoy the fruit.

"We get a lot of people from Boise and Mountain Home and enjoy being face-to-face with our customers," Cathy said.

The farm's pumpkin patch has expanded onto rented ground next to their orchard.

On their 10.5-acre farm, roughly two-thirds of it is orchards with more than 1,400 trees.

"Our kids are grown, but they come help us sometimes. Our son and his family live in Kuna, our oldest daughter lives in Meridian and our youngest daughter lives in Lewiston," she said.

Cathy handles the website, www.cabalosorchard.com, writes blogs and posts about the orchard on Facebook.

This is how they keep customers aware of when certain fruits and vegetables will be ready and when the greenhouse will be open.

A few years ago, she started a newsletter. "This has been helpful, because people always wanted me to call them when this or that was ready to pick. Now they receive the email newsletter," Cathy said.

"We're open Friday, Saturday and Sunday to the public, so on Wednesday night I do the newsletter to let people know what will be ripe this week. People sign up for the newsletter, and it also posts to our Facebook page," she said.

She uses an email marketing service provider for the newsletter. It allows up to 2,000 mailings per month at no charge, she said.

She and her husband make a great team, running the farm and orchard, she said.

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