

## Draper Valley Vineyard a juicy matter for Curtices

By SCOTT JORGENSEN  
IVN Staff Writer

What began as a health problem eventually became a new beginning for Draper Valley Vineyard owners Al & Sandy Curtice, of Selma.

The couple was living in California's Napa Valley, where he was an electrical contractor and she worked at St. Helena Hospital, when Al was diagnosed with Meniere's disease in 2001.

That ailment had caused Al to experience dizziness, vertigo and nausea. After talking to a specialist, he learned that improvements in his diet and lifestyle could help recover the hearing he had lost.

"It made me start thinking about what I could do," he said.

The couple purchased property at 1751 Draper Valley Road in Selma in August 2002. During spring 2004, Al remodeled the house on the property, which was built in the early 1900s, then brought Sandy and their infant son, Nelson, up to Oregon.

The 48-acre property was already a vineyard, but needed some work. "It was in disrepair," said Al. "It had

been neglected for five to eight years."

So the Curtices brought in a "couple of tons of grapes," he said, and began planting them.

Now, the vineyard grows a total of four grape varieties -- Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling. But these grapes will not end up in wine glasses. Rather, they will go to make nonalcoholic juice.

While Draper Valley Vineyard follows many of the same processes as the average vineyard, it uses sterile filtration instead of pasteurizing.

"This way, we get to keep the fresh goodness of the grapes," said Al. "Our process is what really sets us apart."

Part of what simplifies the process is the fact that since they won't be used for alcohol, the grapes do not have to ferment. It also allows Draper Valley Vineyard to develop its own special niche.

"It's an all natural product that's good for you," Al said. "It's a classy beverage that the entire family can enjoy."



Al Curtice with juice processing equipment. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen)

Draper Valley Vineyard's juice has been selling commercially for the past eight months, and is carried at Taylor's Country Store in Cave Junction, Gooseberries in Grants Pass, and Harry & David in Medford among other locations.

With the fall season rapidly approaching, the Curtices are anticipating their busiest time of the year. Aside from harvesting the grapes, they have to process and bottle the final product.

"There's no time to sit

and wait," said Al. "It has to be done all at once."

He added that the business may add a testing room next year, depending on how business goes during the next few months.

He also might expand the vineyard beyond its cur-

rent 18 acres, and would like to try mixing blends of grape juice with other fruit flavors, like pears or peaches.

For more information on Draper Valley Vineyard, phone 597-4737 or visit drapervalleyvineyard.com.

## Biscuit Fire study contends natural regeneration resulted in lesser fire severity

The Biscuit Fire of 2002 -- which nearly caused evacuation of all 17,000 Illinois Valley residents -- burned more severely in areas that had been salvage logged and replanted, compared to similar areas that burned in 1987, but were left to regenerate naturally, a new study concludes.

The analysis, one of the first to quantify the effect of salvage logging and replanting on future fire severity, was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, a professional journal. It was published by scientists from Oregon State University at Corvallis and the Pacific Northwest Research Station of the U.S. Forest Service.

It found that fire severity was 16 to 61 percent higher in logged and planted areas vs. those that had burned severely and were left alone in a fire 15 years earlier. The study was conducted in areas that had burned twice -- once in the 1987 Silver Fire, also in Illinois Valley, and again in the massive 2002 Biscuit Fire, one of the largest forest fires in modern U.S. history.

"Many forest managers in the past have assumed that salvage logging after a severe forest fire, along with replanting new trees, will reduce future fire severity," said Jonathan Thompson, a doctoral student at OSU in the Dept. of Forest Science, and lead author on the study. "This is based on the assumption that removing dead trees reduces fuel loads and planting conifers hastens the return of fire-resistant forests.

"However, those assumptions have never really

been tested," Thompson said. "This analysis showed that, after accounting for the effects of topography, Silver Fire severity and other environmental variables, the Biscuit Fire severity was higher where they had done salvage logging and planting."

It's not completely clear from these data, Thompson said, what the causative mechanism is -- the tree removal, the addition of more fine fuels to the forest floor during the logging operation, or the growth of new trees that for several decades may be very vulnerable to new fires.

The study is not, researchers said, an indictment of salvage logging -- it may still have value for economic purposes or to assure the establishment of desired tree species. However, "the hypothesis that salvage-logging, then planting, reduces reburn severity is not supported by these data," the scientists said in their report.

"Young forests in this region are susceptible to recurring severe fires," Thompson said. "Compared to an older forest with branches high above the forest floor, young trees are very vulnerable, whether they are planted or naturally regenerated."

However, in the aftermath of a wildfire, removal of large, dead trees, followed by planting conifer seedlings, does not appear to lessen the risk of severe fires during the first 10 to 20 years, Thompson said.

This may be because the logging process leaves more available fuel on the forest floor; the dense, ho-

mogenous replantation of young trees provides a good setting for fire; or some combination of these factors over time.

"Dead woody fuel ... is only part of the fire risk story, and it may not be the most important after a few years," the study noted.

By contrast, natural regeneration of forests, he said, appears to result in at least slightly -- and sometimes significantly -- less risk of severe future fires. This could be because the regenerating trees are patchier, have open gaps, more species diversity, or other

factors.

But the study showed that total consumption of tree crowns in a recurring fire situation is more severe in the managed stands than the natural ones, at least when there are one to two decades between fires.

This research was con-

ducted with satellite data, government agency records and aerial photography, in the mixed-conifer, mixed-evergreen hardwood zones of the Siskiyou Mountains. It analyzed burn severity patterns with a commonly used metric of fire damage

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