



There's no secret recipe for the wine made by the Schedeen brothers of Boring. Both testify that their product is good and local tavern owners are betting on it: they've already lined up for the still unavailable stocks of wine

This business is sweeter than wine

While the wine ages, the winegrowers ferment.

Tony and Brinkley Schedeen are taking the Big Fir Winery on Tickle Creek toward its opening day of business with the speed of a growing blackberry.

"There's no rush," Tony declared. "We've seen wineries put half-hearted wines on the market because they were in too great a hurry."

The first bottle of Schedeen wine might be on the shelves by next September.

The enterprise can't wait much longer than that. For a tart and fruity taste, the wine should age for six to eight months, the brothers say. For a smoother taste, it must sit for 1½-2 years. The optimum storage time is less than three years for fruit wines.

"We've never been able to keep wine around that long," Tony chuckled.

Rush is something reserved for fraternities, not for the Schedeen brothers' wine. The pair has about 1100 gallons sleeping in kegs in the aging room.

At the eye of the lull, however, there's a storm of learning brewing.

Backed by "our zymologist," Samuel Pengelly, the two have picked up an extensive knowledge of the activity of yeast cultures in liquids. Samuel calls the shots in the laboratory. Brinkley admitted, but he and Tony insist on knowing what's going on inside the barrels.

Sounds of activity aren't limited to the crackling of "yeast going like crazy." Big Fir has 320 acres that need tending.

"We have about 150 acres in berries, 150 in timber and 20 acres in dogs," Brinkley said, playfully cuffing one of seven canine residents.

The pair built Tony's house, which will be converted eventually into a wine tasting room. More outbuildings are in progress.

The back-to-nature brothers believe in doing it themselves. By aging in the Gresham area to the ripe years of 26 and 31, respectively, Tony and Brinkley have collected a few friends.

"There's always five or six people around to help out," Brinkley said. Ray Burnhardt helped build a forced air heater for the Schedeens' combination storage shed-play room. Tommy Althausen also turned in a lot of free labor.

There's a catch. Those 1100 gallons of wine in storage have already been spoken for by friends who sampled the stuff all in a day's work. Local taverns also are lining up for the still unavailable stocks of wine.

The Schedeens offer expertise at the tasting end of the bottle.

"When I was 16, I started making wine. My intention was really to create alcohol," Tony admitted. "I was always getting into it before it was through fermenting. It was horrible stuff."

Over the years, he acquired more patience and fewer stomach aches. The improving product led to thoughts of business.

Brinkley dropped a crate of raspberries on the ground one day. "Get the kegs," Tony called. "Let's make some wine."

"We made raspberry wine for three consecutive summers," Brinkley said. "It inspired us. The wine just started coming out great. There's no secret recipe."

The pair obtained large quantities of advice from winegrowers in Oregon and California.

"Fruit winemakers are not at all secretive," Tony noted appreciatively. "They're like a bunch of musicians talking about techniques."

Grape growers are another story. "There's a lot of snobbery in the grape wine business," Tony said. "They say if you're not making grape wine, you're just making alcoholic juice."

"It's Ford versus Chevrolet all over again," Brinkley added. "It gets kind of silly after a while."

"We're not interested in making a



KEGS STACK up over the head of Brinkley Schedeen, top, as stores collect before wine sales begin. The labels for the new enterprise will read, Big Fir Winery on Tickle Creek, named for the lightning-ravaged tree shading Tony Schedeen and tractor, above. At right, Tony, left, and Brinkley Schedeen test a batch of blackberry wine for clarity. Although the pair is involved in a move back to nature, Tony makes a concession to progress, lighting the fire with a blow torch, below right. The brothers also use an "iron wine" machine to harvest berries.

classy wine."

They are interested in good taste—for personal as well as business reasons. Won't they drink up the profits?

"We've been accused of that already," Tony laughed.

The winery is all business. The brothers buy beer for functions with friends while awaiting a license.

The acreage east of Boring makes good partying, but their land has long been an operating Schedeen farm. Tony and Brinkley's father, Poly Schedeen, raised crops from pole beans to berries for the last 30 years.

The transformation from working farm to winery will be made with his participation and blessing. It's a way to stabilize farm profits.

"Both our parents are actively involved emotionally," Brinkley said. "The license is in Poly's name and he's up here working all the time."

"It just wouldn't be the same without the old man around."

The family is on a first name basis. "We all feel on the same level," Tony (Roland E. Jr.) explained. "Our parents allow us that kind of room."

"We call Betty 'Betty' because she's more than a mother," Brinkley added. "They're both like the professionals in our lives."

The laid-back farm life would not be what it is without two women, Julieann Schedeen, Tony's wife, and Elma Falcon, Brinkley's girlfriend.

"The ladies make it interesting," Brinkley said. "They don't need night life. In June, July and August, we just farm. We might make it into town once every 15 days—if it rains."

"It takes a woman who can appreciate and live with dirt." "And we say 'dirty' with all the affection in the world," Tony smiled.

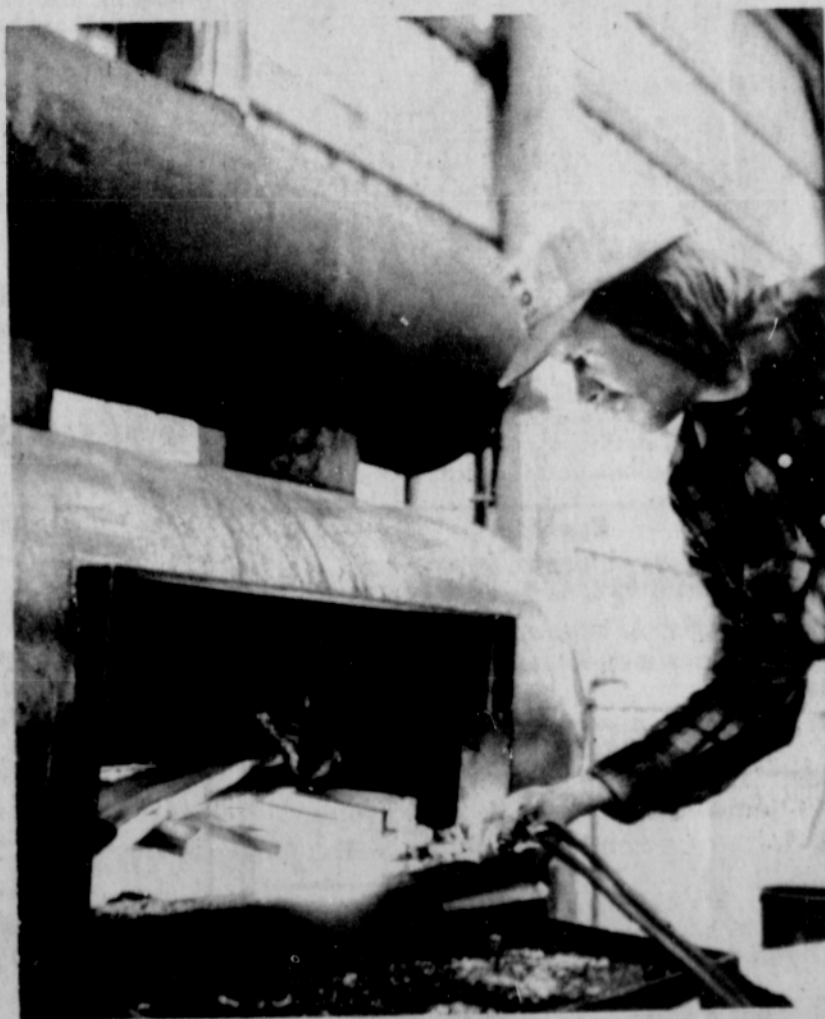
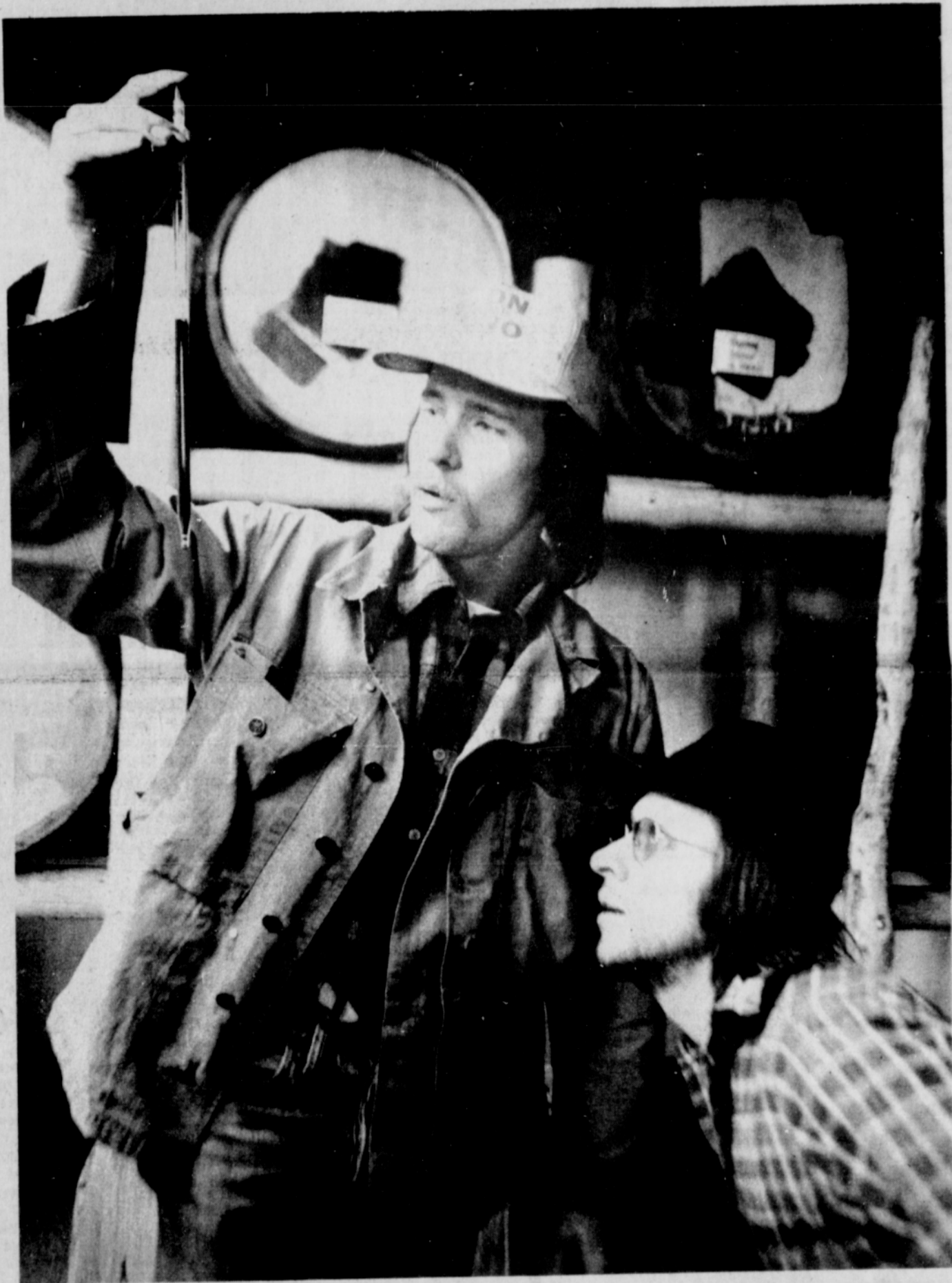
The enterprise also will leave room for down-to-earth creativity. Although local merchants advise production of two or three really good wines, the brothers expect to expand eventually.

"We made a small batch of banana wine," Brinkley recalled. "It was a near throw-away. The color was bad. The taste was bad. For a while it just got shuffled around."

"The whole thing got no respect at all," Tony added.

One day, the pair took a taste and the wine was terrific.

Patience and a little age can turn a washout into a winery.



Story/photos by Lori Varosh

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