



Schedeen brothers' fruit wine rated tops

The Schedeen brothers have found success early.

Roland Jr. (Tony) and Brinkley have been selling wine from their Big Fir Winery for six months and have already won an Oregon State Fair award for one of their wines.

The Boring winery took top honors for its Marionberry entry in the blackberry division. Tony noted that Big Fir had actually taken second place despite receiving top honors. The judges felt that there wasn't any wine entered that deserved first place but that Big Fir was the best wine entered, he said.

The flirtation with state recognition has made the Schedeen brothers thirsty for fame, so to speak. Next year they plan to enter in state fair competition again, but this time around they will be better prepared. They just grabbed a couple bottles of wine to take to this year's competition without filtering it or otherwise preparing the product, Tony said.

Next year the wine will be selected better, Tony promises.

Big Fir will enter in the same competition as this year, blackberry and dinner wine categories.

"It was a real treat to us to win this year but next year we will be more professional," Tony said.

Big Fir did not win anything in the dinner category this year. Tony wasn't surprised as he and Brinkley were pitting their fruit wine against grape wines. Grape wine producers don't consider fruit wines a true wine, he added. It was a shock to the grape wine producers to see a fruit wine entered in the dinner wine section, Tony said with a grin.

"We'll enter in the dinner wine competition next year too," he said.

One goal of the Schedeen brothers is to bring respectability to fruit wines. One way they're doing this is by not producing any sweet wines. Tony says he doesn't like the sweet wine taste and instead is producing semi-sweet and dry wines.

Banana wines next

Big Fir Winery is expanding all the time and the company is currently making a test batch of banana wine and may make grapefruit wine in the future. The local business will also be making three kinds of grape wine soon. The brothers, who are co-managers of the operation, are growing a half-acre of grapes.

They will soon be making red pinot noir, white pinot blanc and white riesling wines. These wines will join the family of Marion blackberry, Evergreen blackberry and raspberry flavors already produced.

The banana wine is just an experiment to determine the right process for that unique flavor. The process is much the same for all the wines: The fruit is crushed and stored in a large vat. In a period of

five to seven days, sugar and yeast are added gradually. Liquid forms in the bottom of the vat. After about one week the liquid is transferred to a second vat, where it sits for two to three weeks, fermenting some more. It is during this fermentation period that the sugar turns to alcohol.

The wine is then transferred to kegs, where it is kept for about 10 or 12 months. It is transferred to a clean keg every month eliminate bacteria cultures. Then the wine is bottled and ready to consume.

The longer the wine sits the better it gets, according to Bill Miller, who is salesman for Big Fir.

The banana wine was a little harder to make because of the hassle of peeling and crushing them.

"Banana peels were all over the place," Tony laughed. If the company can perfect the taste, then banana wine will be produced commercially, Tony said. Bananas are plentiful and easy to get, he noted.

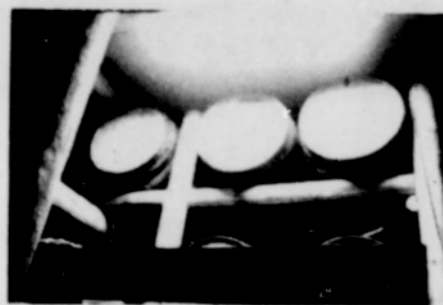
The brothers experimented with Concord grape wine once but soon gave that up.

"It tasted terrible," Tony lamented.

The Schedeens have plans to make an experimental batch of grapefruit wine soon.

Even though the business has been selling wine for only six months, it has been in business going on three years now. New equipment for the wine-making process has been purchased and a new wine tasting room has just been completed.

Big Fir recently bought \$6,000 worth of filtering and crushing equipment from Italy. Tony said



that wine making equipment is not made in the states.

It seemed a natural that the brothers go in the wine making business as their family owns 150 acres or so of berries. Only about three or four percent of the crop is used for the wine with the rest of the berries being sold commercially.

The Schedeens have owned the berry farm for 28 years. Roland Sr. owns the wine business.

At this time Big Fir is not a profit making operation but Tony expects it to be soon.

Tony's goal is to produce 100,000 gallons of wine a year.

Story, photos by Brad LaBrie

Bill Miller stands by the wine vats on top.

Miller and Tony Schedeen make use of new wine tasting room above. Below is the winery entrance and at right Tony stands in front of part of the 150 acres of berries in the Schedeen farm.

