

South Dakota wine industry thrives

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VOLGA, S.D. — Jim and Nancy Schade opened their winery, Schade Vineyard, with the goal of bringing a touch of Napa Valley to the South Dakota prairie.

Schade was the third vineyard set up in the state after the Legislature passed a 1996 law allowing farm wineries.

South Dakota's burgeoning industry is now a dozen wineries strong, and produced 39,785 gallons in 2006.

Visitors to Schade Vineyard can tour the property, take in some Midwest hospitality and sample an array of potent potables made from locally grown grapes, rhubarb, plums, buffaloberries and chokecherries.

"I think the rhubarb wine is most unique to South Dakota," Nancy Schade said.

The Schades, who bottled their first batch in 2000, produced 3,000 cases last year using several varieties of grapes grown on their 2-acre vineyard and grapes and other fruits bought from a dozen or so area growers.

"All of our grapes and fruit are grown within 200 miles of our vineyard," Nancy Schade said.

While vineyards in California and Oregon have had more than a century to perfect growing their grape types, varieties hardy enough to survive South Dakota winters are the result of recent breeding, said Rhoda Burrows, a Cooperative Extension horticultural specialist at South Dakota State University.

"Instead of having hundreds of years of experience in knowing how to grow this vine, we may have 10 years or five years," she said. "So we're still learning about the cultivars themselves and how best to grow them."

South Dakota's industry is mostly a niche market, but wines produced by the state's two largest wineries — Prairie Berry Winery in Hill City and Valiant Vineyards in Vermillion — have been competitive internationally, Burrows said.

In a state more famous for corn and soybeans, about 70 acres of grapes are growing, but that number could soon increase.

Nearly 140 people showed up for beginning grape-growing workshops offered this spring, Burrows said.

South Dakota wineries can sell their products at the vineyards and through retailers, but they may not ship bottles within the state.

They may ship to most surrounding areas, but the laws and licensing fees vary state-to-state.

The Schades have opted to bottle and label by hand rather than investing immediately in high-priced equipment.

It's important to keep costs down, because rural Midwesterners are not accustomed to paying the same prices customers pay in Napa Valley, they said.

"We have to be very aware of that," Nancy Schade said.

A CELEBRATION OF AMERICA IN BLOOM AT FARMINGTON ELEMENTARY



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Farmington Elementary School students display certificates they received for their participation in a Virginia Cooperative Extension enrichment program that included several hands-on activities to introduce them to plants. For their final project, the students planted red, white and blue flowers in front of the school in recognition of the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown.

HorseQuester back in the saddle in the Wolverine State

This week, we visited what I can only describe as the horse lovers idea of Heaven.

We have been in Michigan visiting with the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH) chapter in Lansing and have had a wonderful time despite the rain with our hosts Larry and Marika Heuer, trail riding in a couple of the state parks — Ionia and Sleepy Hollow.

Yes, I am finally back in the saddle again.

We have seen first hand the good work that Larry and Marika are doing to try and raise awareness of the ILPH-MI and to help aid, rehabilitate and rehouse neglected horses in the same way that the parent charity the ILPH itself does.

If you get the chance, please go on to our Web site — horsequestusa.org — to read more about them and, if you can, please give a little to their cause — they are doing good work under difficult circumstances to help make the lives of some horses a lot better.

However, I have to tell you about this place Mackinac Island, which Larry and Marika insisted we should go and see.

We left our horses Max and Roo with them for a couple of days and headed some 300 miles north — much further and we would have ended up in Canada.

What makes Mackinac Island so amazing in this high-tech world of ours is that motorized vehicles (other than golf carts on the golf course) are not allowed



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES



on the island — horses are OK.

We stopped overnight in St. Ignace and took the short ferry crossing to the island first thing in the morning.

It was a really amazing sensation, walking down the High Street and seeing all the horse-drawn vehicles, and people on bicycles, including the taxi rank.

Anita and I felt like we had stepped back in time about 100 years or more and were witnessing rush hour as it used to be.

It was great, so much nicer than the noise and smell of the exhaust fumes from the modern automobile, and we saw many a horse drawn cart delivering goods to the many businesses and hotels on the island.

And while we are on the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO, DAVID HASBURY

The taxi rank is lined up on Mackinac Island, Mich. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the island, which lies between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas at the west end of Lake Huron.

subject of pollution, there were quite a few workers discretely mopping up the horses own "residue," ensuring that the street remained clean and tidy as always, so no issues there.

It's possible to rent horses to ride around the island. And, of course, there seemed to be countless bicycles.

We decided it would be more interesting to try a self-drive buggy. For the uninitiated, "driving" is the term used for riding in a horse and cart, or buggy, so the majority of people ride horses and the rest of us (usually slightly older citizens) "drive."

Driving can be with a single horse or with a team of two, four or even eight horses — when someone talks about "four-in-hand," they are talking about driving with a team of four horses.

We were only using a single horse (Charlie was his name) and a 4-seater buggy which had as the song goes "(a surrey) with the fringe on top."

Anita did the actual driving and I filmed what I could of the adventure — a great time was had by all, including Charlie himself.

If you visit Michigan, a trip to Mackinac Island is well worth the extra time

and travel. To be honest, you really need more than a day to make the most of it. We never even got to take a look around Fort Mackinac.

For any horse lovers, this place definitely is the closest you can get these days to horse Heaven.

As Larry and Marika said, it is not to be missed.

David and Anita Hasbury-Snogles are British residents riding across the United States on horseback to raise money for charity. Visit HorseQuestUSA.org for more information. David can be reached at david_hasbury@yahoo.com.

Drought damaging Georgia crops; jacking up costs

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OMEGA, Ga. — The sky above Randy Scarbor's south Georgia cantaloupe fields was overcast, but the clouds were from massive wildfires to the east. No rain was forecast for the last day in May, a month that set records for

dry conditions in Georgia.

Across the main crop-producing regions of Georgia, the most severe drought in decades — on the heels of the early April frost — is damaging crops and cutting even deeper into farmers' pockets because of the high price of fuel to operate irrigation sys-

tems.

"This is critical," said Scarbor, who farms about 350 acres in southern Georgia. "We're going to suffer severe damages, lose maybe half, two-thirds of the crops."

The ripe cantaloupes at Scarbor's farm are about half the size they should be.

Tommy Irvin, the state's farming chief, estimated losses are in the hundreds of millions of dollars for state farmers, growers and cattlemen.

"We can't get plows in the ground because it's so dry," Scarbor said.

Agriculture is a \$50 billion industry in Georgia.

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