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Everything we do, we do for you!

Yep. The grapes on our cover are from "around here." They are from the late-summer harvest at Valley Mills Vineyards, which two of our photographers, Duane Laverty and Jose Yau experienced at daybreak on two different Saturday mornings. And the fruit you see, carefully nurtured by vineyard owners John and Kandi Bagnasco and Bill and Amy Peper, will yield a smoky, spicy, peppery red Syrah after fermenting for many months in American oak barrels.

But, Ulf and Inga-Lill Westblom, originally from Sweden, were the first to try commercial wine-making in Waco. They started planting at Tehuacana Creek Vineyards in 1997 with just 100 vines. In 2006, the couple opened to the public and have enjoyed entertaining guests from all around the state with their wine, food and warm hospitality.

There are other folks in town who make wine just for the joy and fun of it: Charlie and Kris Olson, Jim Chase, the Beavers family. We bring you their stories from the field, as they share their passion for wine-making in the heart of Texas. They all agree that watching nature do its thing is one of the most rewarding parts of their work.

After discovering so many local vintners, we wondered if maybe wine isn't the next big agricultural boon for Central Texas.

"It is a growing industry," Gene Hall told *Waco Today* writer Sandra Sanchez, for her article "A Time to Grow in Central Texas" (page 38). Hall's a spokesman for the Texas Farm Bureau. "Agriculture these days is about diversification. It's about finding new markets. It's about getting as close to the consumer as you can in terms of marketing and the people that have been successful in the wine industry have found ways to do that."

Sandra takes a closer look at the vineyard business and the economic impact it has in Texas and could have on our area if more people get into the business. But, wine-making takes a lot of money and a lot of patience, everyone told her. It is not for the faint of heart.

Most of us are probably more interested in simply enjoying the final product of a local or regional vintner's labor of love. Well, we can set you up! On page 44, we have a map of some of the area's wineries. I think you'll find that each of them has its own unique style and flavor. Be sure to let us know about your visits by emailing me at wteditor@wacotrib.com. Cheers!



Gretchen Eichenberg
Editor