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THE WEIRS, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, N.H., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

COMPLIMENTARY

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Peter Ellis shows a hearty bunch of grapes ready to be harvested at the Stone Gate Vineyard in Gilford. BRENDAN SMITH PHOTO

GILFORD VINEYARD HARVESTING Fruits of a Great Growing Season

by David Lawton Managing Editor

"It's a great way to make a small fortune, out of a large one." That's the way Peter Ellis of Stone Gate Vineyard described the prospect of winemaking in New Hampshire to a group gathered for a program on that subject at the Lake Winnipesaukee Museum last weekend.

In 2007 Peter and his wife Jane officially opened the winery at their home in their quiet Gilford neighborhood just off of Morrill Street. This summer's warm and dry weather has brought a remarkable crop and has kept the family busy with harvest chores.

In their first year they planted 24 vines which survived and they now have a total of 350 active vines which

Stone Gate Vineyard 27 David Lewis Road Gilford, NH 603-524-4348 Open Sat. & Sun. 1 - 5:00pm through mid-Nov. www.stonegatevineyard.com

will yield approximately 500 gallons of wine. We were fortunate to be able to catch the last variety of grape, the Cayuga, still on the vines See VINEYARD on 42



The vineyard at Stone Gate now includes seventeen rows totalling 350 vines that are wellsuited to New Hampshire's cold climate including Marechal Foch, Leon Millot, Frontenac, BRENDAN SMITH PHOTO Seyval, Cayuga, Steuben, Elvira and Aurore.

VINEYARD from 1

at Stone Gate. Peter and Jane said that they would be harvesting them this week and that they have been walking the rows of vines nightly, carefully tasting and testing the grapes to find the "perfect" moment to harvest.

The idea to start their own vineyard first came about as a result of time that the couple spent living in California's wine country where Peter was sent for an extended business trip in 2000. On weekends they would visit the smaller-scale vineyard

operations in the hills that most people wouldn't visit. It was there that Peter had first posed the question to his wife "I wonder if we could grow grapes?" To which she had quickly replied. "I'm pretty sure we can't." Too late, the seed had been planted.

On their return home they started to investigate the business of winemaking and found that it was virtually non-existent in New Hampshire with only four such operations at the time. One of those, Jewell Towne Vineyards in South Hampton, turned out to be a great resource for them and owner Peter Oldak has helped them tremendously. Oldak started that family business with six vines in 1982 and has been willing to share his decades of trials and tribulations with the Ellis family.

Jane recalled that when they first met with Oldak, the one thing that he had asked of them was, "How strong is your marriage?" This put them off at first, but they have come to realize that he was warning them of the many difficulties that they would face in the business, ranging from agricultural problems to state regulatory obstacles.

They were pretty much pioneers in the business

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This single harvest of eight hundred pounds of grapes will yield over 40 gallons of wine. Still fresh from the vine this batch had not yet begun to actively ferment, a reaction that causes the juice to heat up to as much as 90 degrees.



These Cayuga grapes, a cold climate French hybrid, are

nearly perfect and ready to be harvested to make Stone

Gate's off-dry white wine.



Stone Gate Vineyard is open Saturdays and Sundays from 1-5pm for wine tastings and tours of the vineyard. VINEYARD from 42 farming throughout most

based, hand-crafted businesses, has seen a boom in recent years. With growing demand for "NH

Made" products and the popularity of "shop local" trends, the winery business, too, has grown. There are now 18 wineries that have joined together to form the NH Winery Association (www.nhwinervassociation.com).

Peter told the crowd

gathered at the Museum

that he has always been

involved in some type of

of his life and had been looking for ways to use his agricultural skills in a home-based business venture. He said that one of the biggest enemies to the grape vine is fungus and wet growing seasons like last summer can be disastrous. One of the big attractions at Stone Gate is the

winery where visitors on

weekends through mid-

November can enjoy com-

plimentary samplings of

tasting room above the

have crafted and purchase bottles of their favorites as well. They have brought a slice of wine country back home to Gilford where visitors can experience the charm of a small winery right here in the Lakes Region. The tasting room can

the wines that the Ellis'

BRENDAN SMITH PHOTOS

be arranged for groups of up to twenty or thirty to gather for private events. "The best part," Jane

said to the crowd at the Museum, "is that we get to meet nice people."