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Wednesday, September 20, 2006



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North Dakota not too cold for wine grapes

BUFFALO (AP) - Steve Hogen says most people think North Dakota is too cold for wine production. He used to think the same thing.

"When we were asked if we had thought about growing grapes, our initial reaction was, 'You've got to be nuts, this is North Dakota,'" Hogen said.

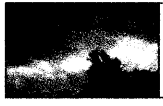
"But when we did investigate it a little bit more, we did find out that there were some varieties that were cold-climate hardy."

The co-owner of the Red Trail Vineyard near Buffalo has been successfully growing grapes and making wine for more than a decade. Since then, the varieties of grapes that can grow in North Dakota have increased sevenfold, Hogen said.

The winery also hosts the North Dakota Wine and Grape Harvest Festival. On Saturday, the event attracted wine connoisseurs and curious North Dakotans alike.

The festival featured a grape stomp, food and craft vendors, bluegrass entertainment and wine sampling.

Jan Scheuring, of Fargo, said she was impressed that grapes could grow through North Dakota's harsh winters.



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"If there are grapes that can withstand the winters, more power to them," Scheuring said. "It's something that I never thought would be possible."

Hogen said it's that attitude that makes the vineyard and festival even more appealing.

"It's a novelty thing. There's a great potential here," he said. "We planted our vines in 2003, and ever since then, people have been coming out."

In addition to educating visitors about the history of the vineyard, the festival acts as a vehicle to promote the grape and wine industry, Hogen said.

"We are hoping that, as the word spreads and people get more inclined toward that wine industry, that they are going to take advantage of having a vineyard so close," he said.

Hogen said that because the vineyard is still growing, he and co-owner Rodney Hogen are still able to talk to visitors and give tours.

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