

Garden Column for the Salisbury Post
Darrell Blackwelder & Amy Lynn Albertson
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Interest in wine and wine grapes brought North Carolina as a wine producing state ranking 10th in the nation for grape and wine production. The state now has more than 70 wineries and over 400 individually owned vineyards encompassing more than 1300 acres. Rowan County has one winery and four vineyards with the interest of many more.

By definition, wine is an alcoholic beverage obtained from the fermentation of juice from freshly gathered grapes or other fruits. Fermentation is the process by which sugar is converted to alcohol by yeasts. At its simplest, wine is made by crushing grapes and allowing the natural yeasts present on the skins to come in to contact with the natural sugars present in the juice. No other human intervention is needed: crushed and fermented like this, any grapes will make wine.

A winemaker intervenes in the fermentation process to affect the quality of the wine that is produced. A good winemaker chooses the best quality fruit, ensuring the operation is carried out so that the final product is bright, clear and fit for consumption. The winemaker can influence the wine in many other ways by selecting the method of fermentation, the mixture of grapes used and the treatment the wine is given in the cellar. Nobody knows who "invented" wine; it was probably accident. After harvesting, some grapes were left in a container over the winter and the natural yeasts and sugars converted the juice into wine.

Making wine sounds simple but it is a little more involved than crushing grapes and letting them ferment. If you have an interest in making wine, Cooperative Extension Service is sponsoring a winemaking class at the Davidson County Extension Center in Lexington on April 3rd at 7PM. Dr. Trevor Phister, NC State University Professor of Wine and Fermented Foods, and Mark Friszolowski, winemaker for Childress Vineyards will present the basics of making wine and starting a small winery. Directions to the extension office can be found on-line at <http://davidson.ces.ncsu.edu> If you have questions or would like to attend, please register by calling the Cooperative Extension in Davidson County at 336-242-2080.

Darrell Blackwelder is an agricultural agent in charge of horticulture with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County. For archived garden columns or other information, visit the Rowan County Master Gardener web site at www.rowanmastergardener.com , e-mail Darrell_Blackwelder@ncsu.edu