

# FOCUS

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## Texas fermentation could lead the nation

By MARK HERRON  
Battalion Reporter

Chateau de TAMU, as Ron Perry calls it, is a wine made right here on campus.

Perry is not a bootlegger, however.

He teaches five courses in the horticulture department, but spends any spare time researching grape production.

After nine years of study and evaluation, Perry said Texas can compete with California, the leading state in wine production. In fact, "Wine from Texas grapes can compete with anybody's."

"Nobody knew we were making wine over here," he said "and we've been making it for almost a year." Perry works in a pomology lab on the west side of the campus, where all types of fruit are studied.

The Chateau de TAMU is made from French Colombard grapes. At a recent wine tasting in Fort Worth, Perry said, two experts, Cornelius Ough and A.N. Kasimatis, both grape specialists from the University of California at Davis, agreed Perry's wine was the best French Colombard they had ever tasted.

"We kept a lid on what we were doing until we found out we were producing quality wine," Perry said.

Wine-making is nothing new to Perry, who grew up around the vineyards of California's Santa Clara valley. "My dad was always making wine when I was a kid," he said.

Perry earned a degree in fruit production at California State Polytechnic University and took courses in viticulture (the care and culture of grapes) and enology (the science of wine-making).

In 1974, Perry received a master's degree from Texas A&M University, after completing a study on the feasibility of grape growing, for wine production, in Texas.

In his thesis Perry wrote, "If grapes could be successfully produced, they would provide a significant new source of income to Texas."

Later that year, Perry said, with help from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, he planted vineyards near Lubbock, El Paso, Uvalde, and in the Texas Hill country near Kerrville. Since it takes three to four years for the fruit to ripen, it was 1978 before the grapes could be harvested.

"We brought the grapes back here in station wagons," he said. In the pomology lab, which Perry calls "a miniature winery," he crushed the grapes, pressed juice from them, and let it ferment. The wine is stored in a cooler at 50 degrees.

With the success of his wine, Perry said he is convinced that a wine industry has great potential in Texas, which is seventh in the nation in wine consumption.

The main reason for the state's potential, Perry

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