

Heard It Through the Grapevine

There's more to this vineyard than just vintage vino

BY NATALIE COBB
Staff Writer

Nestled off Highway 21 on Old Reliance Road is one of Bryan's most prized tourist stops — the Messina Hof winery. This year marks Messina Hof's 21st year, and the winery is celebrating in a big way.

Over the last few years, Messina Hof has made quite a name for itself around the nation. The 40-acre winery has racked up twice as many awards as any other Texas wineries in its two decades. In the 1998 *Dallas Morning News* International Wine Competition, Messina Hof ran away with the most awards from among all of the Texas wineries.

Wines are not all Messina Hof has to offer, however. Visitors may also enjoy The Vintage House, the winery's on-site restaurant. Although the aesthetics of choosing a wine for dinner may intimidate even the most cultured culinary enthusiast, restaurant owner Merrill Bonariggo said beauty is often in the eye of the beholder.

"The best wine in the world is the one you prefer, and the best food with which to serve your favorite wine is primarily a matter of choice," Bonariggo said.

The Vintage House features a menu full of European cuisine paired with a romantic atmosphere overlooking the vineyards. Restaurant hours include lunch Wednesday through Saturday 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., with dinner Thursday through Saturday from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

For those who enjoy dinner so much that they would like to hang around and spend the night, the Messina Hof Bed and Breakfast is available by reservation and can make anyone feel they are on vacation in the French countryside.

Public relations director Cindy Schellenberg said the ebb and flow of Aggie events keep the bed and breakfast's waters stirred throughout the year.

"You can bet the bed and breakfast will be full when Aggie football season starts," Schellenberg said. "We pretty much plan our weekends during the school year around Aggie football, Parent's Weekend and other Aggie traditions."

Although the winery is busy during the school year with school events, the busiest time of the year is in the summer. July brings on the harvest of grapes at Messina Hof, and anyone can pick and stomp grapes until their heart is content. The harvest begins on July 25th. After stomping, grape pickers can move inside for a Wine and Food Pairing Seminar presented by Merrill Bonariggo.

If students need a break from traditional classes and want to take a class in something fun, then Messina Hof might be the place to enroll. Cooking tips frequently are given through the many food and cooking classes presented during the summer.

August 1st promises to be a day filled with culinary delight as Matt Martinez, owner of "Matt's No Place" in Dallas, teaches students the fine art of



Jake Schrickling/The Battalion

Aaron Gill, a junior anthropology major and assistant retail manager for Messina Hof, salutes Don Kidwell, a physics graduate student and Melissa Scheier, a political science graduate student.

creating tantalizing dishes. "We love to have students out to our cooking classes and to the restaurant," Schellenberg said. "We specialize in fantastic food and fantastic service. Aggies are always welcome."

Messina Hof visitors can even cook up some mystery during the "Mafia Murder Mystery" dinner or the "Who Killed the Winemaker Murder Mystery" dinner.

Guests dine on gourmet meals at these events and try to figure out the mystery. "Mafia Murder Mystery" will be held on July 17 and the "Winemaker Murder Mystery" will be held on August 8.

When Father's Day rears its head, forget the standard tie and bring dad out to Messina Hof for the Father's Day Extravaganza. The fun kicks off on the evening of June 19 with a five course gourmet dinner where families can sample the winning wines from the *Dallas*

Morning News competition. On Saturday, fathers can gain the techniques of the master chefs through a cooking school.

During the cooking class they learn how to utilize fresh vegetables in meals and then how to compost the left-over material.

In addition to all of these activities, Messina Hof offers something for everyday.

Come cool off during those hot summer days in Messina Hof's wine tasting room, take a tour of the winery or relax with a glass of your favorite Messina Hof wine. Tours and wine tastings at the winery are available weekdays and weekends.

Whether you want to explore the world of Texas wine, dine or simply relax, Messina Hof has something for everyone.

"We are not a great Texas winery," owner Paul Bonariggo said. "We are a great world class winery."

WEEKEND MOVIE WRAP UP

Hope Floats; Dirty Work sinks

Hope Floats
Starring Sandra Bullock and Harry Connick Jr.
Playing at Hollywood 16 and College Park 6

One of the best flicks of the summer, *Hope Floats*, is an excellent film about love, deception by loved ones and getting through tough times. Labeled a chick flick by most men, this film can appeal to everyone, including guys. Birdie, played by Bullock, is a small-town beauty, whose husband cheats on her with her best friend and reveals it on a trashy talk show. Birdie returns to Texas to start a new life with her daughter. The daughter, Bernice, adds a fun and playful twist to the film and is a great addition to lighten up some of the heavier parts of the film.

There were a few stereotypical scenes of Texas portraying most of the women in cowboy hats while out on the town, but this can be overlooked by Bullock's acting talents and Connick's good looks. This story is an excellent love story that has something everyone can appreciate. "Hope Floats" is an enjoyable, light-hearted movie and is a summer must see. (A)

— Natalie Cobb

Dirty Work
Starring Norm MacDonald, Artie Lange, and Jack Warden
Playing at Hollywood Cinema 16

Former Saturday Night Live actor Norm MacDonald plays Mitch Weaver, a down-on-his-luck kind of guy. Artie Lange plays his best friend, Sam, who also, as it is oh-so-tastefully explained in the opening minutes of the film, happens to Mitch's brother.

Their father (Jack Warden) is in need of a heart transplant, but because of his age, chances of receiving a heart are practically zero, unless Mitch and Sam come up with \$50,000 to bribe the heart surgeon (Chevy Chase in a pitifully unfunny role). In order to get the money, Mitch and Sam open up a revenge-for-hire business, and audiences watch as they do other people's dirty work.

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Justin (Harry Connick Jr.) and Birdie (Sandra Bullock) smarm it up Texas-style in this summer's most recent dose of romantic match-making celluloid, *Hope Floats*.

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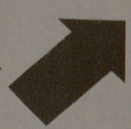
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