

Wine me, dine me

Harvest Festival gives community opportunity to experience winemaking process first-hand

BY BRIAN FLEMING
The Battalion

College Station has never seemed closer to Italy as it has during this year's Messina Hof Harvest Festival. This annual event allows participants to actually take part in the winemaking process.

Cindy Schellenberg, public relations director for Messina Hof, said the Harvest Weekend has become a summer tradition for the Brazos Valley. "The winery has been here since 1983 and this is our 17th public harvest," Schellenberg said. "It began with a group of international students from Texas A&M University who wanted to participate in the harvest, because it was something comfortable for them coming from abroad. It basically made them feel close to home."

Schellenberg said over the years, the harvest festival has grown considerably.

"As of last year, [the festival] has grown to 1,500 participants. Each weekend we filled the place," Schellenberg said.

Schellenberg said Messina Hof is proud of the festival's growth.

"It has been really exciting for us to see how much our festival has grown and how so many people take such an interest in the harvest aspect of winemaking," Schellenberg said.

Schellenberg said the festival allows participants to see the winemaking process from start to finish.

"Most reactions have been of surprise — that

you can actually harvest [grapes] in Texas," Schellenberg said. "What is interesting, though, is that grape vines are actually a part of the Texas heritage dating back to the Spanish settlers because of the native grapes that grew here."

Schellenberg said the native black grape, called the LeNoir, covers the 40 acres of the vineyard. For this harvest, Messina Hof combines the joy of traditional grape stomping with the modern process of making wine.

"Originally, people smashed them with their feet," Schellenberg said. "They did the grape stomping in the big barrels and vats. Today we have moved up to machinery. We still do the grape stomp to fulfill the dream or idea people have when they come to a vineyard, and those involved do still get to see the actual process as well."

Schellenberg said participation in the harvest as well as employment at the winery is an excellent experience for the students involved.

"[The students] can see exactly how an operation such as this runs, from the agricultural end on into the production process and into the restaurant," Schellenberg said.

Whitney Wolf, a senior recreation, park and tourism sciences major, is interning this summer at Messina Hof and is the harvest coordinator.

"This opportunity definitely gives me a good learning experience and is a great foundation for what I want to do after graduation," Wolf said.

SEE WINE ON PAGE 4.

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