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HOME



- BULL BREEDERS
- FARM NEWS
- WHL
- MEET OUR PRAIRIE PEOPLE
- CONTACT US
- PRAIRIE POST EVENTS
- CAREERS
- LETTERS TO EDITOR
- SEND LETTER TO EDITOR
- OPINION
- CLASSIFIEDS
- LINKS
- AD RATES
- DISTRIBUTION AREA
- COUNTY OF NEWELL BOOK
- SUBSCRIPTIONS
- ONLINE PAPER
- THE SOURCE

RECIPE FOR THE DAY  
LOTTERY RESULTS

Search

Staff Login

## PRAIRIE POST SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN

### Cypress Hills Winery, a 100-mile outing

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 23 May 2008  
By Gail Jansen  
Maple Creek

Those looking to have an afternoon's excursion in a hundred mile vein need look no further than Maple Creek's latest visitor attraction and Saskatchewan Tourism's Rookie of the Year for best new business. The Cypress Hills Winery, owned and operated by Marty and Marie Bohnet, is a locavore's dream come true. Not only can they sample local products that have been transformed into delicious wines, they can also sample some local food products, served up in the Cypress Hills Winery Bistro.

The idea to open the winery began when the Bohnets, two former area ranchers, realized their family ranch would no longer be able to support all three of the Bohnet families after the BSE crisis hit in 2003. It was then they decided to take their passion for wine to the next level.

"We tell people it's a good hobby gone bad," jokes Marie.

As avid gardeners the pair had been growing grapes since 1995 starting out with three small vines. As the number of their vines grew, so did their newfound passion, until it reached a point where they started to seriously think doing it as a business venture. The BSE crisis sealed that decision.

In 2004, the couple sold their share of the family business and became licensed for a winery the next year. In 2006, they built the winery, and on June 1, 2007 opened their doors for the very first time.

Since that day the winery has seen more than 15,000 visitors cross its threshold, looking to sample some of its local wares, made with local products.

"We have 4.5 acres of grapes in production," explains Bohnet. "Since our vines are so new, I'd say 80 per cent of the wine we produce right now are local fruit wines."

Focusing on native fruits, the winery makes chokecherry wine, from cherries picked along the creek, sour cherry wine, from a hardy prairie strain of cherries developed by the University of Saskatchewan, sourced near Cabri, and their best-selling wine made from rhubarb grown in the area.

In addition to the winery portion of their business, the couple has also opened a Bistro located at the winery, whose success was a surprise even to Bohnet.

"We've had great success with everything, but that's been the biggest surprise to date is how the food service took off," says Bohnet. "Our menu is very simple fare, with three types of sandwiches and wraps, salads, and cheese platters, and of course our infamous Saskatoon pie."

"We went through hundreds of pies last year," laughs Bohnet.

Serving double duty as both an ingredient for wine as well as the pies made by Currah's Bakery in Maple Creek, the Saskatoon berry is quite possibly the most prominent fruit of a Saskatchewan locavore's diet due to their plentitude throughout the province.

It's just one of the many reasons, locavores and all else who visit, find the Cypress Hills Winery and its magnificent patio and luscious vineyards such a pleasant place to pass a sunny afternoon.

Bohnet says the growing interest and number of inquiries she has received from people wanting to eat and drink product produced locally is something that really intrigues her.

"It's good to see people are becoming more aware of where their food comes from."

For more information about the Cypress Hills Winery, visit their website at:

<http://www.cypresshillswinery.com>

See a review of the winery on Page A19.

Last Updated ( Friday, 30 May 2008 )

< Prev Next >

[ Back ]

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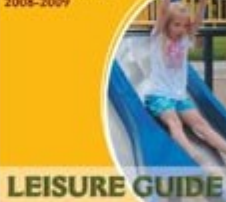
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