

Oklahoma State Center Testing Quality of State's Grapes

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STILLWATER, Okla. (AP) — Gene Clifton with Canadian River Winery in Slaughterville knew his wine tasted good.

He knew the time and effort he spent picking out just the right grapes from Oklahoma vineyards made his product the best it could be.

To make sure his product was chemically correct, he would send it to Texas Tech University, where the wine could be tested to determine its chemical makeup. Once Clifton sent it to the lab, he was able to make sure everything in his wine was as good as he thought it was.

"The sugar content, the alcohol content - everything was right on the money," he said.

Now, Clifton and other wineries don't have to send their product out of state for testing. Food scientists at the Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center at Oklahoma State University are performing those same tests and have even used the results to help name a state wine to be used by the governor.

The testing is made available through a grant from the Oklahoma Viticulture and Enology Fund, created by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

The grant was used to purchase lab equipment, but wineries must still pay \$75 per wine for testing.

The test results are plugged into the data being gathered as part of the Oklahoma Wine Quality Assessment and Improvement project. The first round of testing started at the end of 2012, with 31 wines from across the state. To date, more than 50 wines have been tested.

"We're trying to focus on Oklahoma wines made from Oklahoma grapes," said William McGlynn, FAPC horticultural products processing specialist.

He said that there is nothing wrong with the Oklahoma wineries using grapes from out of state. However, testing wines made from Oklahoma grapes paints a better picture of what is happening in the state's wine industry, he said.

"We're trying to figure out if there is a common issue in (Oklahoma) grapes that we could improve," McGlynn told [The Journal Record](#). [1]

The lab tests are used to study a variety of different aspects of the wine and also

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tell a story about the grapes used in the product. The tests examine the levels of oxygen in the product, color of phenols, juicing sugars, acidity, pH level, alcohol content, and tartaric acid content.

The tests are performed by Angie Lathrop and Veneta Banskalieva in the FAPC analytical services lab.

"We love doing new things," Lathrop said, "so doing something new is always fun."

The only interaction Lathrop and Banskalieva have with the wine was chemically testing it, as they are not allowed to drink it. But Lathrop said if one of the wines smells good, she will purchase it later.

The wines also undergo a sensory evaluation using a system developed by Roy Mitchell, professor of viticulture and enology at Grayson County College and winemaker at Homestead Winery in Ivanhoe, Texas. He assisted in developing a quality rating for all the wines submitted.

Once all the tests are finished, the results are given to McGlynn, who interprets exactly what all the numbers mean in regards to the wine. He takes the results and compares them to testing standards that would rate the results as either high or low quality.

"Most of the wineries we've gotten to test have been high-quality wines," he said.

As a result, McGlynn took some of the top testing wines as well as other submissions from the Oklahoma Grape Industry Council and put them before a judging panel. The panel picked a white and red to be the governor's wines.

One of Clifton's wines made the cut and is now being served at the Governor's Mansion as the Oklahoma Governor's Table Wine. Other wines selected were from Plymouth Valley Cellars of Fairview and Woods and Waters Winery of Anadarko.

McGlynn said the center plans to annually name a governor's wine. The study is an ongoing project, which over time could have an effect on the quality of wine in the state.

"There are a lot of new wineries in Oklahoma," Clifton said. "They need that lab to keep them headed in the right direction. Some wineries don't want to hear bad news. But if they send it to the lab, they'll give you something you may not want to hear, but it's probably something you need to hear."

The next round of testing will begin in the next few weeks when a new batch of wines is expected to arrive.

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