

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1997

Muscadine grapes grow large and sweet at Boggy Creek Vineyard in Vanceleave. The owner, Dr. Jack Hoover, said keeping the plants groomed and fertilized is a labor of love.



## Backyard vintners

*Wine making not limited to France and California*

By **KEN FINK**  
 THE SUN HERALD

OCEAN SPRINGS — Twenty-seven clear one-gallon jugs crowd a tabletop in the workshop behind Robert Beaugez's home. Into the jugs he has poured labor, love, know-how and juice from muscadine grapes.

It's not Napa Valley, but it is good wine. "I learned from my neighbor, Johnny Pitalo," Beaugez said. "I watched him make it and strain it. When he left, he told me I could go get anything I could. ... It

didn't take me long to get the wheelbarrow and get back over there."

Once he set up the equipment, it didn't take long to figure things out. He did it by taste.

"He told me to put my finger in it and taste it," Beaugez said. "That's the art of it."

Beaugez uses a 2-inch by 2-inch piece of wood to smash the grapes into juice.

"I don't stomp them with my feet," he said. "I hate to wash my feet that early in the morning."

He stirs the 20-gallon tank of juice once in the morning and once in the evening.

Roger Lamb of Biloxi enjoys the process as much as the final product.

"I love to make wine," he said. "I like the process. I like to see it ferment and go through the various stages, racking it to get it good and clear."

Lamb produces about 100 gallons in five different blends including muscadine and mayhaw, muscadine and blackberry, blueberry and others.

Some he enjoys himself and some of it he gives away to friends.

The process involves smashing the grapes, adding sugar and cultured wine yeast and ferment at 65 degrees for one to

two months. A "racking" process clears the liquid and a six-week cold stabilization period precedes filtering and bottling.

Both Lamb and Beaugez pick their muscadines at Boggy Creek Vineyard in Vanceleave. Owner Dr. Jack Hoover grows a variety of hybrid muscadines developed at Mississippi State University and other Southern schools.

The hybrid grapes are larger and sweeter. Said Lamb: "You have to have a taste for it."

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PHOTOS BY VERRION MATTHEWS/THE SUN HERALD  
 Dr. Jack Hoover uses a grape press to squeeze muscadine grapes at his Boggy Creek Vineyard in Vanceleave. The 80-acre farm is capable of producing up to 60 tons of muscadines a year.

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Sandra Rey picks muscadine grapes at Boggy Creek Vineyard. She has been coming to the Vancleave farm since it opened 10 years ago. More and more people are coming for grapes to make wine.

## Doctor raises muscadines in his spare time

By **KEN FINK**

THE SUN HERALD

VANCLEAVE — Local wine makers know what their first step is to making good wine: picking their muscadines at Boggy Creek Vineyards.

Business is brisk for Dr. Jack Hoover, who prefers tending his vineyard to fishing or golfing. People flock to his six-acre plot to get hybrid muscadines for both wine and jams and jellies.

"I suppose I inherited it," Hoover said. "My father was a Ph.D. in agronomy at Mississippi State. Through him I met a viticulturalist, one who is an expert in growing grapes. He said 'Jack, you need to put in grapes.'"

That was at a time when the state was pushing farmers to introduce alternate crops. The drawback? It takes three years before farmers can get a crop.

On the up side, farmers plant only once and a good vineyard that is maintained well can last up to 25 years.

Hoover, who spends most of his time with his OB-GYN practice in Pascagoula, also devotes a lot of time to his 80-

### Ready to pick

**Who:** Boggy Creek Vineyard

**What:** Pick your own muscadine grapes

**When:** 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. now through Sept. 28 and the following two weekends — Oct. 4 and Oct. 11

**Details:** 826-4369

**How to get there:** Take Interstate 10 to Mississippi 57, east of Ocean Springs. Go north on 57 and turn right on Poticaw Road in Vancleave. Go 1.3 miles. Turn right on Paige Bayou Road and go 1.7 miles to Boggy Creek Vineyard.