OSU holds its inaugural Wine Forum over weekend

By Monique Headley
Stillwater NewsPress

Participants at the inaugural Wine Forum of Oklahoma Friday and Saturday at Oklahoma State University learned about wine and food, wine and health, wine and history and even wine and yoga.

The event offered Oklahomans information, wine, academia and celebrity chefs and vintners. The various seminars provided information specific to microorganisms that control wine production and the evolution of the Oklahoma wine industry and explored the relationship between wine and food and the connection among wine, yoga and health.

Green wineries and the culture of France were discussed, and several tastings, panels and cooking demos enhanced the seminar offerings.

Featured forum speakers included Tim Hanni, chief executive officer of the Napa Seasoning Company, and Chef Alain Sailhac, executive vice president and dean emeritus of The French Culinary Institute. Additional speakers included Argentfork publisher Mark Brown, award-winning sommelier and yoga instructor Christié Dufault, Van Duzer Vineyards winemaker Jim Kakacek, Local Table chef and owner Tuck Curren and wine educator G. M. "Pooch" Pucilowski.

OSU professors Dr. Bob Miller and Eric T. Stafne discussed the connection of science and history of wine.

"Important for understanding wines is the knowledge of what you like," Stafne said. "There are a lot of types, and they are all acceptable. There are a lot of small scale and several larger wineries in Oklahoma. Experience is important in upgrading the ability of a winery to grow grapes.

"To thrive, it is important wineries meet quality demand, cultivate product that tolerates environment, pests and climate. Acceptable levels of crop yield and production consistency are also important."

Wine, he said, offers a challenge to the palate. Its production can be similarly demanding.

"Oklahoma has a long way to go in successfully growing its wine industry," he said.

Soil, climate, weather condi-

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He said Cynthiana, Chambourcin and Traminette grapes respond best to the hardiness needed to grow in Oklahoma. In certain areas, the vigorous European varietal Vitis vinifera, the common grape vine, may also provide success. OSU is also experimenting with wine made from blackberry, Stafne said.

Hybrids offer good crop yield, he added. They are created by grafting vines for improved vigor and production yields, soil adaptation and insect resistance. Stafne recommended rootstock 3309 and 10114 for best grafting, vigor and yield outcome. Rootstock is an established and healthy plant or root used for grafting a cutting from another plant. Stafne said Oklahoma farmers attended the forum to get information about expanding beyond traditional crops.

“Typically, we grow wheat and cattle,” said Darrell Dedrick. “We wanted to explore other varieties or maybe even blackberries. The forum seemed like a great place to get information.”

For a list of state wineries, visit the Oklahoma Grape Growers and Wine Makers Association Web site at www.oklahomawines.org.