



## Winery brings home three awards in first competition

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Frank Boldon uses a "wine thief" to draw some wine from the top of a barrel for tasting. Boldon says the barrels are like his children? "I could practically name each of these barrels. Peggy Rowe (prowe@mcdowellnews.com)

Debra and Frank Boldon are making a name for themselves and their winery.

Three of their products - Cabernet Franc 2005, Cabernet Franc Reserve 2005 and Maestro 2005 - won bronze awards at this year's N.C. State Fair Wine Competition.

"I would have been surprised if we hadn't won something," Frank stated, confident of the spirits he formulates, "and it's only going to get better. 2005 was good, 2006 is better and what we've made in 2007 is great."

Debra added that it's the first time they've competed. The couple submitted four red wines and three of them took medals.

Thirty-two North Carolina wineries offered 249 products for judging.

The Boldons bought the property that houses South Creek Vineyards and Winery in 2002 and have been working since to make it something people from McDowell and surrounding areas could enjoy. They opened to the public in April 2007, meaning they will give tours of the grounds and a wine tasting for \$5 per person.

"Our key is to educate people," Frank stated. "We want to show people that it can be done in McDowell County. We want others to learn how to do it."

"The wine industry is competitive, but we want to help each other, too," Debra added.

The vineyards and winery are set up on a sprawling 30-acre farm on South Creek Road. The house that serves as the centerpiece has been traced back to 1902, according to the Boldons.

They say the keys to making their good wine are the sloped land and good soil, help from an expert consultant from Charlotte, their state-of-the-art equipment, their hands-on approach to the job and their ability to work together.

"I have a good palate and she has a good nose," said Frank.

He also pointed out his French oak barrels and the fact that they are constructed without the aid of nails or glue.

"These barrels are like children," he stated. "Each has its own characteristics. I love them all but some stand out."

He said he only produces 500 cases of each wine, so it's not like a winemaking factory that puts

out bottles by the tens of thousands.

"You'll never see these in grocery stores," he stated, holding up a filled bottle. "We are hands-on with each one of these."

Frank grew up in Clinchfield, went into the military and he and Debra, a Georgia native, returned to Marion in 1992. Frank worked as one of the lead administrators at Secor in Hickory, from which he retired in June 2000, and it was this position that led him to wine making.

He said, since he was a company official, he often took people from other companies out to dinner and he was always the one that ended up with the wine list.

He added that not knowing one beverage from another was quite embarrassing. Frank decided to educate himself and that put him on the road to a new venture.

"It was intimidating at first," he said. "I needed something to do after I retired, and after studying it, I decided this was the thing."

Debra stated that Frank does most of the work, but she enjoys their new career as well.

"It's been a wonderful learning experience," she said. "We meet a lot of people, too, and we enjoy that. The community has been very accepting of us."

She added that people from as far away as Canada, Australia and California have visited the vineyards and winery located at 2240 South Creek Road in Nebo.

The hours are Thursday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. South Creek Vineyards and Winery can be reached at 652-5729 or 460-8120 or on the Internet at [www.SouthCreekWinery.com](http://www.SouthCreekWinery.com).