



Oz Winery a Fun Stop for Serious, Not-so-Serious Wine Enthusiasts

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WAMEGO, Kan. -- When Brooke Balderson and Noah Wright started working together at the Oz Winery on the main street of Wamego they had a mission. The two professionally trained culinary artists wanted to create a winery where everyone could enjoy themselves.

“We wanted a winery where people, whether they considered themselves wine connoisseurs or wine curious, could come, try some of our wines and have fun,” Balderson said.

Balderson, a Wamego native, is a certified pastry chef from the Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Institute. Wright is a certified wine professional from the Culinary Institute of America in Napa Valley. Both are graduates of Kansas State University and returned to Wamego in 2007.

“We have fun working together and we hope that enjoyment touches everyone who visits the Oz Winery,” Wright said.

The winery, located on KS 99, which has been officially designated the “Road to Oz,” opened its doors in 2007 and immediately began receiving awards for its wines. Oz Winery wines have been winners of the Kansas State Fair People’s Choice Awards for several years. The winery also specializes in limited edition wines, such as the OZtoberFest annual series and Surrender, a sherry-like dessert wine.

Adding to the fun at the Oz Winery are the clever names of the wines and unique bottle labels. A new wine from the winery, a port-like dessert wine, is called The Lion’s Courage. Other wines include Witch in a Ditch, Run Toto Run, Witch Gone Good and Emerald City Lights, which was a featured wine for the third course of the Kansas Grape Growers & Winemakers Association Pioneer Banquet in 2009.

“We’re serious about creating our wonderful wines, but we like to have fun with the packaging and the sharing of them,” Wright said. “We hope to take some of the mystery and pretense out of wines, by making them more accessible to a broader market.”

Most of Oz Winery’s wines are available for tasting at the winery.

“We love to share our wines, as well as the fun, with our customers. And this is a place where questions, from how we make our wines to what kind of wine accompanies their favorite meals, are welcome. There are no stupid questions here,” Balderson said.

But what is at the winery is a wide variety of wine, bar and party accessories, as well as special gifts for the special people in your life. Balderson also uses her culinary training and talent to prepare special treats for private tasting parties that can be booked at the winery.

The Oz Winery is located at 417 Lincoln Avenue, Wamego, Kansas. It is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. The winery can be reached at (785) 456-7417 and www.OzWineryKansas.com.