

Simply Aronia Wine

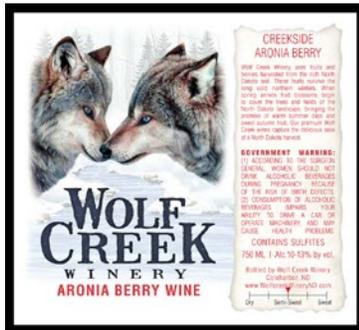
March 9, 2016 by Mildred Culp, Ph.D

Several years ago, my husband and I ordered some aronia wine on the Internet. The entire contents of the bottle landed in the sink. More recently, skilled winemakers are proving that aronia makes good wine.

Two of the wineries are Randy Albrecht's [Wolf Creek Winery](#) in Coleharbor, North Dakota, and Gerry Godfrey's [Mount Zion Orchard](#) in Marydel, Maryland.

Albrecht's \$15.99 Aronia Berry Wine – a semi-sweet standout – won a bronze at the 2015 Wine Competition of the North Dakota Grape and Wine Association. Other Wolf Creek wines have won awards in other competitions.

Godfrey's Mount Zion sells a diverse quartet of aronia wines: Skinny Oak Aronia Wine, \$16, Whole Notes Aronia Wine, \$16, Party Foul, \$16 and the apple and aronia Duet, \$12.



This label graces Aronia Berry Wine from Randy Albrecht at Wolf Creek Winery in Coleharbor, N.D.

The collection attests to the fruit's versatility. "We give our wines different treatment to accommodate different tastes," Godfrey indicates. "Our four aronia wine styles have moved rather evenly." The two winemakers will compete against each other this year.

Both winemakers experimented to get the product they wanted. Godfrey teamed with a nearby winemaker.

During the winemaking process, Albrecht leaves the wine on the skins, "depending on the wine, probably three to five days, depending on fermentation. The longer you let it sit on the skin, the more tannins you're going to get into your juice. We don't simmer the concentrate. When it reaches a proper temperature for fermentation, we begin that process and monitor it on the skin, and when we press it, we don't over-extract."

Godfrey also varies fermentation, but for approximately two weeks, "based on fermentation speed, temperature, fruitiness, aromatics, color and skin thickness." He prefers a darker wine and feels that it has more character.

Albrecht points out that aronia berries are considerably more expensive than some other fruits, and there's no standard pricing, although volume is a factor. The price and quality of aronia vary greatly, but he feels fortunate that his North Dakota grower sells him high quality, handpicked berries "at a very fair market price."



As it ferments, aronia must will be punched down twice a day at Mount Zion Orchard in Marydel, Md.



Pressing of aronia wine at Mount Zion Orchard.



A ballerina, the winemaker's granddaughter, checks for quality assurance in pressed apple juice destined for Mount Zion Orchard's Duet, an apple/aronia blend.



A quartet of aronia wines is produced at Mount Zion Orchard.
Credit: <http://loblolly.biz/>

“We bought 100 pounds to try, then last year bought all we had room for,” Albrecht says. He observes that aronia is, “significantly more expensive than grapes. ... (In my area,) it’s a seller’s market – more demand than berries.” He’s growing a small stand of his own.

The Marydel winery supplies aronia from its own orchard and purchases from other growers.

“We think aronia has a definite place in our winery and it’s part of our wine varieties,” Wolf Creek’s winemaker continues. “It’s a good berry to work with. It’s a clean berry. Other than the little bit of astringency, it’s very easy to work with.”

Mildred Culp, Ph.D., is communications director at Coldbrook Farm Inc. Email mildred@coldbrookfarm.net. Copyright 2016 Coldbrook Farm, Inc.



Judges at the 2015 Wine Competition of the North Dakota Grape and Wine Association conferred a bronze on Aronia Berry Wine from Wolf Creek Winery.