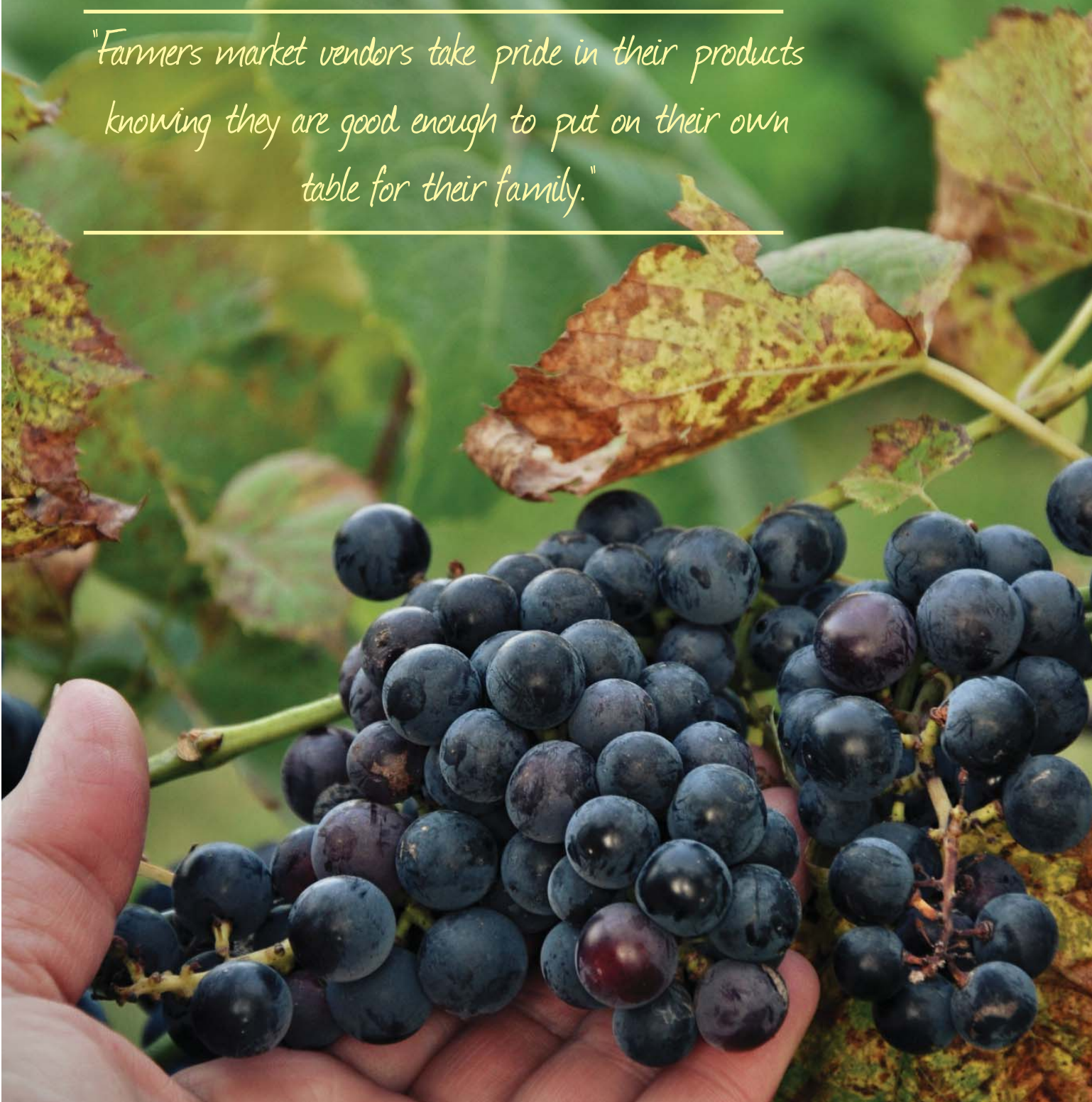


Waukon, Iowa

Empty Nest Winery Dave & Pam Kruger

"Farmers market vendors take pride in their products knowing they are good enough to put on their own table for their family."





Dave and Pam Kruger started Empty Nest Winery in 2011. But they have enjoyed making wine for years.

It was the growing up and moving out of the Krugers' four kids (inspiration for their logo) that really became the catalyst for an official business. That, along with the fact that to serve their wine at two local weddings the Krugers had to get a license, started the ball rolling. "We talked about the possibility and just decided to go for it," Pam says.

And it's been a wild ride. Already, the Krugers have added on a tasting room, outdoor patio, and underground cellar. They are selling at over a dozen retail locations in Northeast Iowa and hosting private parties. The one thing they haven't done is spend money on marketing - they haven't needed to. The 18 unfiltered, straight berry wines offered by Empty Nest Winery sell themselves, almost too quickly.

The old-fashioned process the Krugers use requires smaller batches, a tremendous amount of work by hand (they grow and pick the vast majority of the berries they use) and several rounds of racking. They ferment the whole berries, not just the juice, which is unusual to do on such a scale of production. But for Dave and Pam, the extra work is worth the product which results. Unfiltered, whole berry fermentation means a more vibrant color, authentic aroma and real depth of fruit flavor. It also means that there might be a thin layer of sediment on the bottom of the bottle. But as Dave and Pam will tell you, it's much like buying a beer at a local microbrewery - the layer on the bottom is proof of a quality process.

The Krugers use local blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, elderberries, strawberries, rhubarb, blackcaps and grapes as well as



Missouri peaches. When they can't grow enough to meet demand, they try to source as close to home as possible. (Pam wishes they could grow peaches but, she laments, it's just too cold of a climate.)

Dave and Pam love having fun with the fruit combinations. Indeed "having fun" seems to be the answer to just about every question you ask the Krugers. Even the long, tedious stretches of bottling (6-8 hours spans) are revered as good times, especially when the kids are home and joining in the task. When they are crafting a new vintage they just have fun with it, bouncing ideas back and forth. One of their most popular wines, now called Twig & Berries, started out as just rhubarb wine. But, Pam says, it was just wasn't as great as she wanted it to be. She and Dave added raspberries to the next batch, and, the result was definitely better, but still too sour. Dave suggested they try also adding blueberries, a berry known for its smoothness and one which could maybe balance out the other two tart choices. And it worked. Pam calls it "rhubarb dessert in a glass" and it is hard to keep on the shelves.

Empty Nest Wines are not only crisp and delicious; they are affordable - costing between \$9 and \$15. Buy your favorites at retail locations across Northeast Iowa and at the Empty Nest Winery Tasting Room during tasting hours on Saturday and Sunday. To learn more about Dave and Pam's berry wines, see the complete list of vendors, or join their new Wine Club with access to special vintages visit www.emptynestwinery.com or call 563-568-2758. Empty Nest Winery is located at 1352 Apple Road, Waukon, Iowa 52172 - between Decorah and Waukon, Iowa.

