



# Nordic Oak Vineyards Closer To First Harvest

**By Michael Stein**

Two years ago, the Record-Review reported on Aubree and Kai Martinez establishing the first Barnesville Vineyard. Along with friends, Aubree and Kai planted the first 750 vines at their newly formed Nordic Oaks Vineyards near Highway 9 and Old 52.

The Barnesville couple turned what had been a hobby into a business aspiration in 2019 with the purchase of 17 acres of land and quantities of six types of vines.

Along with knowledge and a drive to succeed, Aubree and Kai know it takes plenty of patience and faith in the weather to produce quality wines. From planting to harvest, it takes from three to four years—and that's followed by the aging process in oak barrels for some of their preferred wines.

Currently, Aubree said, "We now have about 850 vines planted. We also planted 20 apple trees last spring."

Ideally, a vine will produce seven to 12 pounds of grapes. That output will produce two to three bottles.

The summer of 2020 was intended to focus on planning and building a shop that would include an area for public events.

COVID-19 altered those aspirations.

"We had to change our plans for the building because of high construction costs and the pandemic," Aubree said. "For the winery we had the idea of a place where we could hold events with larger groups of people. But now we're looking at a shop mainly for production and having a smaller tasting area."



It's a fun learning experience at the vineyard for Kai and Aubree's daughters Evie and Lila.

The concept of patrons coming to create that outdoor setting where people can be outside and taste our wines."

"It's really beautiful and peaceful out there," Aubree said. "So we want

to create that outdoor setting where people can be outside and taste our wines."

For now, Aubree and Kai continue to make improvements to the land and hope for good growing seasons.

"That cold stretch in February was really stressful," Aubree said. "We select plants that can make it through winters, but that extended bitter cold can be really hard on them. Some may die off, but we won't know that for sure until they start breaking buds in the spring."

There's no way to protect vines from the type of sub-zero cold snap we experienced in February. And there are other hazards that meander in as well.

"We've had pocket gophers out there which ruined a couple of vines," Aubree said. "And we've seen deer munching on the leaves."

While making plans for their winery in Barnesville, Aubree and Kai traveled to various vineyards around the country to get ideas and inspiration. According to the Minnesota Grape Growers Association, there are several wineries scattered throughout the state. The Martinez's are the first vintners in the immediate areas.

"We've been to a few others since then, but not as many as we had planned to because of the present situation," Aubree said. "There's a few around the region we've visited, like Dakota Vines in Colfax, N.D. There's a new one coming up in the Detroit Lakes area. We were supposed to go to California last year to tour some wineries, but the pandemic put an end to that. But last summer we did a tour on the Minnesota/Wisconsin border that was enjoyable."

Nordic Oaks Vineyards will most certainly be a family affair. The Martinez's have a two-year old and a first-grader. The entire family enjoys spending time together on their vineyard.

"We make it fun for them," Aubree said. "It's something we can pass on to our kids."

Kai has been working on branding the names of each wine they'll produce and creating a theme for each as well.

"It's been fun coming up with ideas," Aubree said. "Our goal will

be to name each wine after the type of grape. For example, one will be called LaCrescent, a semi sweet wine."

Depending on conditions, the Martinez's hope to have a partial harvest this fall for a spring 2022 release.



Aubree and Kai Martinez are committed to making Nordic Oak Vineyards an attraction to area residents and visitors for many years to come. Aubree is employed by Midwest Bank-Barnesville Branch as a mortgage loan officer and Kai works for Bell Bank as an underwriter.

# Move Meets Expectation For New Residents

**By LaVonne Redding**

Choosing a place to call home can be daunting, especially with a young family to consider. Stefan and Heather Winkler considered all the options when trying to make a logical decision.

Selecting Barnesville as the location to build their new home has proven to be the perfect choice. After living in the community for a little over a year, they wished they had made the move sooner. Barnesville just checked all of their boxes.

The couple has two small children, daughter Viera who is five-years-old, and their son Calan, two-years-old. Small schools, neighborhood playgrounds were a few items on their list of a new community. An additional member of their family is their husky/Australian shepherd mix dog named Wolf.

With both of them working in the Fargo/Moorhead area, moving to a city with an easy commute was a priority. Heather works for Hospice of the Red River Valley, and Stefan is employed with the Moorhead Fire Department.

After living in Moorhead, the two made the choice to move to a smaller community. Both were raised in small towns and were looking for the same environment to raise their own family. The amenities that the city provided such as the grocery store, hardware store, parks, daycare, restaurants/bars and the greenhouse, made the decision

much easier.

Doing any activity outside is a must for the family. The family enjoys movie nights, gardening and going on road trips. Being able to watch the cows from their backyard has become a pastime. Viera likes riding her bike, dancing and gymnastics. Calan loves to take the wagon around the yard and neighborhood, along with collecting rocks. It also seems that anything with a motor catches his eye.

Heather and Stefan have been working with the local HELPERS program. Their participation has been limited during the pandemic. Both are anticipating being able to be more involved with their new community.

Relocating during the pandemic didn't seem to pose any difficulties for the family. Heather shares that they have wonderful neighbors. Being put on the wait list for daycare, it didn't take either one of the kids long to handle the transition once the spots opened up for them.

The family is excited for social gatherings, in person meetings and events to open up again. Being a social couple, they are anticipating going places and hanging out with family and friends soon.

The next adventure the family of four are looking forward to is an overseas trip in the fall to England. Heather has family that live in Scotland and England. They are anxious to visit with them and explore the sights.



The Winklers found a perfect fit with their move to Barnesville. Stefan and Heather enjoy the outdoors with their two children, Viera and her younger brother Calan.

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