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Gary Haddle tastes one of the grapes, saying they are very nearly ready for harvesting.

By **Greg Wells**  
Editor Cumberland County News

Retiring to Southern Kentucky isn't all that rare a thing, but planting thousands of grape and berry vines and bushes, then making award winning wine out of them is much, much, less common.

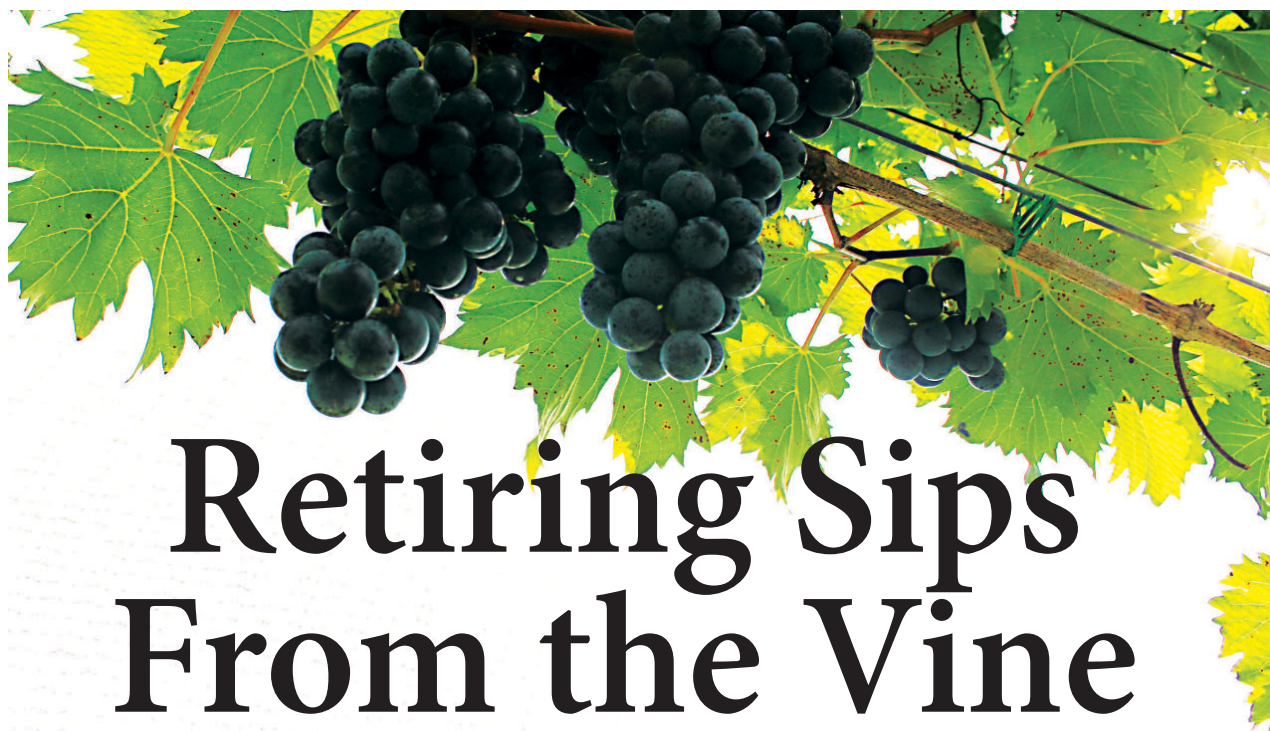
Gary Haddle escaped the stress in Northern Virginia back in 2002. "I lived on a houseboat while I built the cabin," Gary explained. "We started planting the vineyard in 2003." He, his brother and what they call a "big band of part-timers," tend the vines and brambles that their wine comes from as something of a community effort.

For several years now the winery has been open on Fridays and Saturdays for tastings, and visitors are welcome to tour the fields.

"When it is harvest time people just show up to help," Haddle said. They also help when it comes to keeping the grapes and berries safe. "When my brother David is here he'll drive through this field 3 or 4 times a day watching out for raccoons, turkey and the deer."

As Gary is talking in the field, having just covered some of the vines back over with the protective netting one of his dogs runs through the long grass and tackles something dark and the fur begins to fly.

It was a raccoon. The thief was trying to sneak into the grape arbors to eat his fill in the middle of the day, not 20 yards from two trucks, and two people, and the two dogs that put an end to that thievery.



# Retiring Sips From the Vine

## IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY

He said pressure from the animals has been especially heavy this year, but he and his brother, along with Jackie Reese work on keeping the danger to their grapes at a minimum. Then there are Lisa Thomas, Winfred Crook, Richard Dyer, Leslie Neal and Timmy Thrasher rounding out the usual crew at the winery.

The wines are made from several varieties of grapes, but also blackberries, raspberries, blueberries and even strawberries. The berries are blended or pure and some of the grapes even find themselves matched up with some jalapeno peppers in one of their wines.

Different varieties of oaks are used in the aging all in all Gary has volumes of charts measuring the progress of each batch.

That attention to detail has earned the winery two gold medals and a commissioner's award.

A few years ago they took a gold and four silver medals with the winery honored as having the Best Boutique Wine with their Stormy Blue entry, a desert wine blend of blueberries and strawberries. The year before that a gold, two silvers and two bronze and the year before that four silvers and a bronze.

Gary said their big winner over the years among their Kentucky wines has been the Burley Blend. The wine is a blend of Chambourcin, Cabernet and Marquette grapes.

More recently, during COVID, the judging was not

See VINE, PG 5

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