



By Ashleigh Noyes

Tribune Staff

Nearly two years ago, during an especially wonderful outbreak of dandelions in their yard, Stefanie Young did some research on how to use these obnoxious weeds for good.

At this specific time she came across a recipe for a Dandelion Port Wine—and the rest is history.

For many years now, Stefanie has been a wine lover and collector. She would purchase wines from all over just to have that special variety for any occasion. For this reason she decided to look into creating her own wines as a hobby.

“It is not a simple process to make wines, and it takes a lot of time and aging for specific varieties, but the fun and experimentation is why I do it,” said Stefanie. “To have the ability to make each bottle my own.”

“The ingredients I use in my wines differ greatly. Some are made from juice that I purchase in three gallon bags which will make six gallons of wine or 30 bottles,” she said.

Her favorite wines are made during the summer when she has fresh fruit readily available to indulge in her wine making hobby.

The wine takes between 30 and 45 days to properly ferment before it can be bottled.

She says that prior to bottling the wine, everything must be sanitized. The bottles are then filled, and she has her husband, Bruce, or another assistant help her when she corks the wine, for safety purposes. A foil cap is then applied and the wine is dunked into boiling water.

Once the process is complete, the bottles must stay upright for at least 24 hours to prevent leakage from the loose cork. The bottles are then labeled and stored on racks built beneath the stairs in their home.

When asked about her oldest wines, she said that the oldest wine she currently has on her shelves is one-and-one-half years old. It is a Dandelion Port that is aging for flavor along with several other younger wines.

The two batches of wine that Bruce and Stefanie bottled over the Christmas holiday were a Cabernet/Merlot blend and a batch of Freaked Out Hippy Wine, which seems to be very popular among their tasters.

Prior to the Christmas holiday Bruce and Stefanie had over 250 bottles of homemade wine in their cellar and 12 gallons more ready to be bottled.

The fact that Bruce and Stefanie cannot sell their wine for profit does not hold them back in the least. The time spent creating and bottling all kinds of wines that they can enjoy with friends and family makes the time it takes worthwhile.

This year under their Christmas tree were multiple baskets of homemade bath salts, body scrubs and homemade wine wrapped in elegant baskets with big red bows just waiting to fill someone's New Year with a little more cheer.