



Photo by Jim Evans

Ron Thyfault has patented a low temperature method of fermentation for wheat that he says will make wheat wine competitive with wine made from grapes.

"TASTES LIKE THE REAL THING"

Kansas Farmer Makes Wine Out Of Wheat

"The profit potential for grain farmers is tremendous," says Ronald Thyfault, Damar, Kan., who says he can pull \$250 out of a single bushel of wheat by turning it into a wheat wine that he says is "as good or better" than wine made from grapes.

Thyfault says there's never been a wheat wine on the market - or a wine made from any other grain - because no one has ever figured out how to convert starches to sugar before the fermentation process without using enzymes and high heat. Government regulations are written in such a way that if you do use heat to enhance enzymatic action, the resulting mash is classified as "fit for distillation" to be made into whiskey or other hard liquors. The difference in taxation between liquors and wine is drastic at \$12.80 per gallon for liquor and just 17 cents per gallon for wine. The regulations are designed to make it nearly impossible for producers of cheap, low alcoholic beverages to compete with the established wine industry.

Now Thyfault has patented a low temperature method of starch conversion for wheat that he says will make his wine a tough competitor in a competitive industry.

"I had to prove to government regulators that I could convert starches to sugar without high heat which allows my product to be licensed as wine and not distilled spirits," says Thyfault, noting that since he got his license, he's had trouble getting information about commercial wine production from industry trade groups and large commercial wineries. "They're not too willing to help because they know this is going to hurt them."

Thyfault got his start in the alcohol business 10 years ago when he was involved in the operation of a farm alcohol fuel plant. That's when, through experimentation, he came up with his new low-temperature starch conversion method, a method that he plans to keep a secret. In addition to low-cost wine production, he notes that the method will also reduce the cost of farm alcohol fuel production.

"My wheat crops have been worth less than \$3 a bushel in recent years. By turning it into wine, I can extract \$250 of value out of that same bushel," Thyfault says. "It costs me a little more than one dollar a gallon to make my wine. The cheapest commercial wine on the market is about \$10 a gallon."

At a recent exhibition for new products, Thyfault conducted taste tests for his new wine, asking participants to write down their impressions. Comments were overwhelmingly favorable, ranging from "Surprisingly good" to "Reminds me of a good, dry white wine".

"It has some of the flavor of grape wine because we use grape tannins in the production of it. It's got a 14% alcohol content," says Thyfault, who makes the wine in 250-gal. batches for his own use. He's setting up a company to produce the wine on a commercial basis. After getting a patent on the process for converting wheat to wine, he received a second patent covering all other cereal grains. "My wine-making process will work with any small grain," he says.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ronald Thyfault, Rogina Wines, Rt. 1, Box 12, Damar, Kan. 67632 (ph 913-839-4432).

PRECISION SCALED TO A 6,000 BU. BIN

Grain Bin Mail Box

The smallest grain bin you've ever seen actually stores mail on the E.J. Siefker farm near Moran, Kan.

The mail bin, 18 in. tall and 24 in. in dia., is precision scaled to a real 6,000 bu. bin. And, like a real bin, it's equipped with a ladder and a top lid. But to handle mail, the bin also features a front door and a mail sign in the shape of the American flag.

The mail bin was a Christmas gift from Siefker's wife, Barb. It was built for the Siefkers by Jim Strong, a retired friend and neighbor. The bin completes an impressive layout of 41 more conventionally sized grain bins on the Siefker farm.

The mail bin's sides and roof are made from separate sections of rolled galvanized steel. They're studded with rows of sheet metal screws to make it look like metal sheets have been bolted together, just like on real bins. Thin metal strips down the roof add to the realism.

A local tin shop rolled the flat sections of steel in a circle for Strong. He then lapped their ends together, installing lag screws with hatch heads into a strip of metal placed up and down along the inside of the joint.

To build the roof, Strong cut a wedge out



"Mail bin" is equipped with a ladder and opening top door just like a real bin.

of the center of a flat sheet of metal and brought the outside edges together, where he installed lag screws.

He fashioned the flag from heavier gauge steel, bolting the bottom end to the bin, which allows the upper end to be raised and lowered. He then painted the flag red, white and blue.

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DURABLE AND EASY TO MAINTAIN

Purple Martin "Castles"

"My purple martin houses are lightweight, durable, easy to maintain and won't rot or rust," says Gary Fiscus, Kerrville, Tex., who's manufacturing martin "castle" bird houses made from plastic and masonite.

Fiscus offers 10 different models, including more conventionally designed houses with flat sloping roofs. The structures range in size from 8 to 24 units.

The "castles" consist of several columns of 6-in. dia. thin-wall plastic tubes arranged in various configurations and heights. The tubes are sprayed with a white, high gloss, automotive acrylic enamel finish. Pop riveted to the tops of the tubes are conical tower roofs, made from high density polyethylene. The roofs sport tiny colored plastic flags.

The floors for each unit, which also serve as outside perches for the birds, are made of double-walled, fluted plastic which provides ventilation for the houses. As heat rises from the ground, it goes through the fluted floor openings, is trapped between the double walls, and is pushed out the flutes in the porch area. The floors slip out like drawers for easy cleaning and for off-season storage. "Removing the floors allows nesting material from the previous nesting season to fall out the bottom and prevents other birds from nesting in the houses during the off-season," notes Fiscus, adding, "These houses are extremely light and easy to handle. Even the biggest 24-unit castle weighs only 28 lbs. One person can easily move it up or down the pole." The roofs and floors are available in 5 different colors: blue, gray, red, yellow and green. Twenty foot telescoping poles put the "castles" high in the sky. Fiscus recommends anchoring the poles with an 18-in. footing.

The houses range in price from \$54.95 for an 8-unit house to \$179.95 for a 24-unit "castle".

For more information, contact: FARM



Fiscus makes 10 different Martin Castle designs. Floors slide out for quick year-end cleaning

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