

# The grapes of Cath: Read between the vines

BY CATHY RODGERS

With the challenges of the last two years, there have been moments of unique opportunity for those willing to “seize the daze.” Rather than furrow my brow at this tipping point, I did what generations of hearty Applegate farmers have done: envisioned a “sipping” point and decided to plow forward. At this writing, we’re still working on final details before opening, but want to bring you up to date on all that’s been going on (updates will be posted at rivercrest ranch.com).

This year, 2021, has turned out to be pivotal for my ranch in the Upper Applegate, RiverCrest Ranch (RCR). In October, RCR was awarded a \$250,000 US Department of Agriculture (USDA) woman-owned, rural farm, value-added product grant. These grants are crucial to small farmers as they seek to scale operations, increase local employment, and expand sales opportunities. RCR will now produce a custom crush, and “The Grapes of Cath” will be coming soon to restaurants and stores near you!

RCR, established in 1992, is in a naturally exquisite location on the banks of the Applegate River, one mile south of Star Ranger Station and one mile north of historic McKee Bridge. This 11-acre ranch in a park-like setting in the heart of Applegate hosts a boutique vineyard featuring approximately 4,000 vines of Pinot Noir, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rare French Rhone Cunoise. The vineyard, framed in roses, harkens back to simpler times and “days of wine and roses,” when life moved at a slower, simpler pace and “face time” meant people actually getting together in person.

RCR achieved the much coveted “LIVE” (low-input viticulture enology)

certification, an internationally recognized third-party certification of collaborative science-based wine-growing standards, in 2019. This holistic approach to sustainable agriculture is representative of my long-standing dedication to being a steward of the land. Twelve years ago, I and my two daughters, Jenny and Katie, founded Rooted in Hope, a nonprofit organization that has sponsored tree planting, water conservation programs, and sustainable education projects around the world.

Bringing this sustainable mindset to RCR was a natural extension of our family’s moral and ethical commitment to do right by the land and water. We’re working to ensure the protection and conservation of the fragile riparian areas, wildlife habitats, and wilderness that define the Applegate. This spring RCR also achieved its US Department of Agriculture Organic Certification.

### Expanded operations

The ranch has recently expanded operations to include a beautiful lavender field. Guests visiting RCR can sip fine wines and picnic with views of the Applegate River and the beauty of fresh lavender blooms and fragrance. RCR has several varieties of English and French lavender, including Phenomenal, Hidcote, Munstead, and Grosso. This spring we will double the current field of 550 plants to 1,100 with the introduction of three additional varieties. RCR looks forward to joining the Southern Oregon Lavender Trail for the 2022 season.

The Rodgers clan is famous for its competitive nature, and the property features a wide variety of activities for both young and old (and young at heart), including bocce ball,

horseshoes, tetherball, volleyball, lawn chess, croquet, hopscotch, dreamcatcher swings, a kids’ area, disc golf, and board games. It’s a perfect place to picnic, to play, to sip, to saunter.

With a philosophy of “wander at will,” RCR features rustic walking trails through Applegate River tailings that celebrate the area’s historic mining operations of the 1870s. The property offers multiple private picnic areas, fire pits, and a drum circle. Guests can enjoy the organic garden and tree nursery, self-pick fresh lavender for crafts and culinary projects, or just sit, sip, and let time go by. RCR features a wide variety of native flora, fauna, and Oregon tree species, further celebrating its deep roots in the community.

Visitors can often spot some of the local wildlife, including deer, jackrabbits, wild turkeys, bobcats, falcons, butterflies, bears, and an occasional neighbor. Bring a book, have a look, sit and sip, read between the vines.

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Cathy Rodgers holding grapes from this year’s RiverCrest Ranch harvest. Photo: Diana Potts.



RiverCrest Ranch has several varieties of English and French lavender. Photo: Cathy Rodgers.



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