

# Changing Times

*After decades of dairying,  
Boyden Farm re-invents itself*

"You can't live here and not accept change," says Diancy Boyden, matriarch of a thriving family farm in Cambridge that, just eight years ago, was at a perilous crossroads after almost a century of dairying.

At the time, Diancy and her husband, Fred, believed that in order to keep the dairy going they would have to more than double the herd — from 200 to 500 — and invest \$2,000 per stall for a new barn.

Or, they could look at other options.

One promising possibility was their fledgling vineyard, started a few years earlier by their son, David. There was growing interest among consumers in artisan wine.

Consumers were also getting more interested in local foods, naturally raised foods, and re-discovering where their food comes from by visiting farms and buying directly from farmers.

The farm also had a good location, at the junction of Routes 104 and 15, with plenty of local traffic and year-round visitors to nearby Smugglers Notch, an outdoor recreation mecca.

By NOREEN CARGILL  
Photographed by ALDEN PELLETT

Gradually, and with their three adult children involved, the Boydens pulled all these strands together. Today, Boyden Farm runs a winery and produces naturally raised beef. It also operates a food market, trades with nearby grocers and farmers, and attracts visitors with family-friendly amusements such as hayrides, tours and a summer music series.

Some changes, such as the winery and entertainment options, are a startling break from the farm's past. "If he had said he was going to build an airplane, I wouldn't have thought it as far fetched," Fred remembers thinking when David said he wanted to start a vineyard.

But in other ways, the farm was only doing what it had always been doing — mixing it up, trying new things, sensing what people might want and selling it to them right there on the farm. Through much of its dairy history, Boyden Farm had also grown and sold corn, soybeans, winter rye and hay, and sold these products directly to people. About 50 years ago, Fred became the first on the farm to try sugaring, which also brought a steady stream of buyers to the farm.

Today, Fred is still sugaring, but the dairy cows are gone. The old barn that sheltered them from 1914 to 2000 is split with a new wall in the middle, dividing the area with beef calves from the new Milk House Market and ice cream shop.

Daughter Stephanie thinks selling the cows was probably hardest on her dad. "He's a classic Vermonter," she says. "If he had his way, he would still be milking 30 cows and using horses to plow the field." But, she adds, "Though change is hard for him, I think he's proud of all of us."

Three generations live on the re-invented farm. Fred and Diancy reside in the main house, part of a cluster of original buildings that makes up the heart of the farm's operations. The families of David and his brother, Mark, live in homes in the same area, and Stephanie and her family live in a house they built nearby, on a hill overlooking the fields. Fred and Diancy's five grandchildren, ranging from toddlers to pre-teens, represent the fifth generation of Boydens to grow up on the farm.

The Boyden family members share a love of their Vermont farm and an entrepreneurial spirit inspired by their land. "We're able to add our own talent and creativity," says



**What:**  
Boyden Farm and Boyden Valley Winery

**Where:**  
Cambridge, at the junction of Routes 104 and 15

(802) 644-6363  
[www.boydenfarm.com](http://www.boydenfarm.com)

Lauri, Mark's wife. Lauri operates the Milk House Market and Scoop Shop, while Mark raises Boyden Farm natural beef. David and his wife Linda run Boyden Valley Winery. Stephanie now works away from the farm, but she still keeps a hand in things by doing design work when needed. She created the labels for most of the farm's products, and her husband, Teo Campbell, also an artist, designed the sign that hangs on the front of the winery. Diancy designs and maintains the farm's lawns and gardens. Fred, of course, produces Boyden Maple Syrup.

"The beef thing is going gangbusters," says Mark, and the winery seems like it could just keep growing. Not long ago, while spending time in Germany, David learned how to create ice wines. Made with grapes that are harvested and pressed while frozen, the sweet dessert wine has turned out to be a perfect match for the Vermont vineyard. Boyden's Vermont Ice wine won a silver medal at the 2006 Indiana State Fair, one of the largest wine competitions in the country.

David currently produces about 4,000 cases a year, but says, "We don't want to grow too much more. We want to stay a small winery, because I make the wine. If we change the

winemaker, the wines will be totally different."

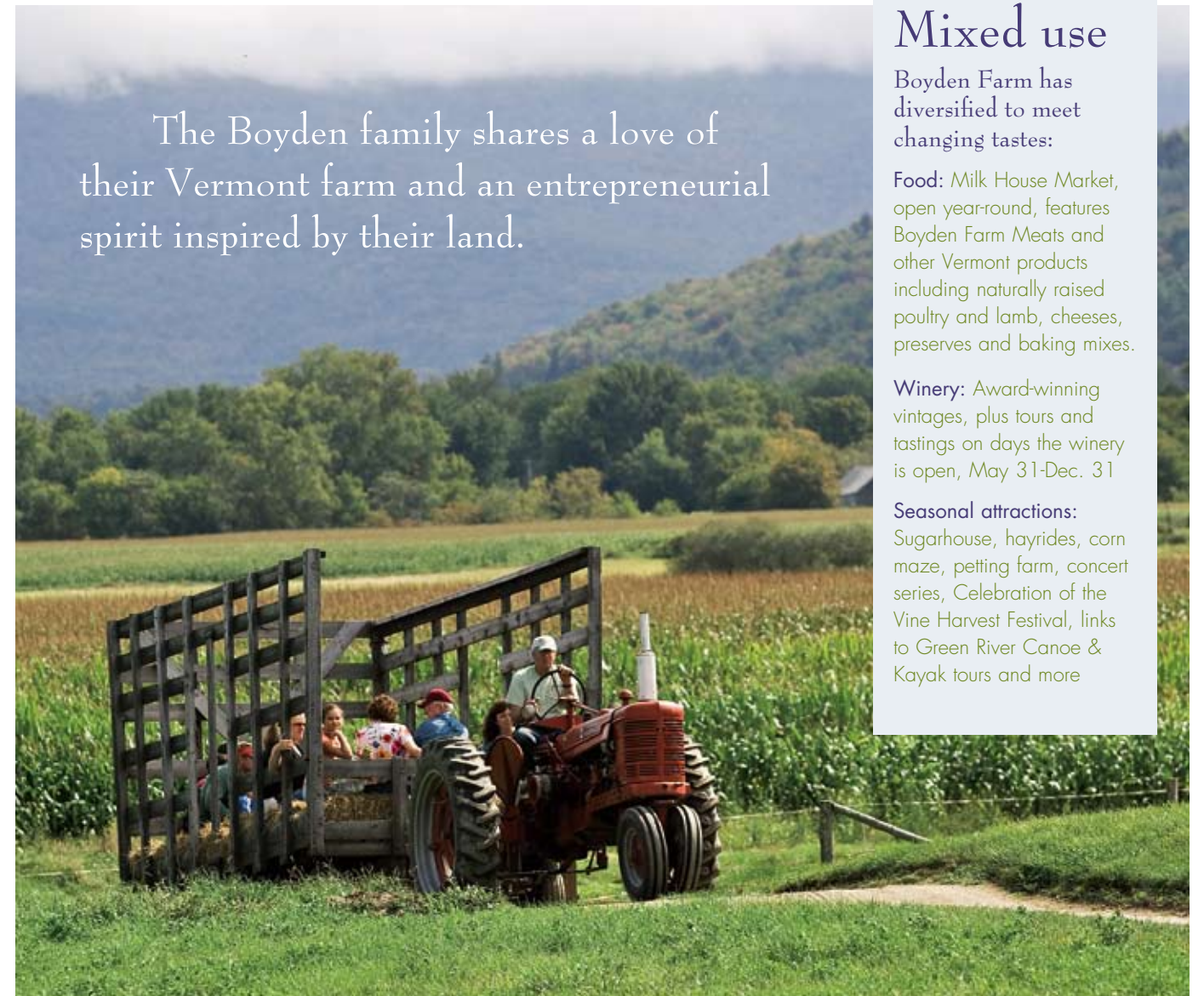
Mark, who orchestrates Boyden Farm Meats — raising the animals, setting up sales and doing all of the marketing — says he's pleased with the success of the business, and pleased to tie in with nearby farms to help them stay in business. In addition to raising his own beef cattle — he has about 210 cows and calves — he works with other farmers, like Ed Stygles, of Jericho. Stygles owns about 30 brood cows and can count on Mark to buy all of his calves each year.

"We need more people to keep mama cows. If we could get up to 600 head a year, that would support about a dozen farms with around 50 cows each," Mark says. This would keep more people in farming and more land open, too.

Mark also imagines a day when Boyden Farm has grown to become "a destination point, like Cold Hollow Cider Mill and Ben & Jerry's." Why not? Some big changes have already been accomplished.

"I spent the first couple of years driving around Vermont," Mark says about his initial sales efforts. "Now people are calling me." ❖

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## Mixed use

Boyden Farm has diversified to meet changing tastes:

**Food:** Milk House Market, open year-round, features Boyden Farm Meats and other Vermont products including naturally raised poultry and lamb, cheeses, preserves and baking mixes.

**Winery:** Award-winning vintages, plus tours and tastings on days the winery is open, May 31-Dec. 31

**Seasonal attractions:** Sugarhouse, hayrides, corn maze, petting farm, concert series, Celebration of the Vine Harvest Festival, links to Green River Canoe & Kayak tours and more

