

Pasta, Passion and Pistols



Paris Winery employee Diana Gunderson (left) and co-owner Lisa Ciarrocchi relax on the patio at Paris Winery. If the weather is appropriate, the Mystery Dinner Theater and other events can be held outdoors at the winery. —Staff photo by Dave Phillips

Paris Winery offers Mystery Dinner Theater

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Looking for a night full of mystery, interaction and food? If so, Paris Winery is the place to be Saturday night.

Unfortunately for most, this month's edition of Mystery Dinner Theater is fully booked, but Sept. 19 and Oct. 17 will offer the next two chances to be part of the action.

"It's kind of like a big family gathering," Paris Winery co-owner Lisa Ciarrocchi said. "We put everyone at bigger tables like a big Italian family dinner."

The current theme is "Pasta, Passion and Pistols," featuring characters like Marco Roni and Father Alfredo.

Attendees of a Mystery Dinner Theater event will not be limited to viewing. Though it's not required, the audience is encouraged to participate.

"Guests are actually the characters," Ciarrocchi said.

The script plays out like a game of Clue, Ciarrocchi said. Nobody — including the guilty

suspect — knows who committed the crime until the very end.

"It's a real simple dialogue," Ciarrocchi said. Characters read that dialogue, but a large part of the performance is based on questioning.

Ciarrocchi said several guests become quite animated during the event.

"All the guests interrogate," Ciarrocchi said, "and we get them to where they're pounding their fist on the table (saying) 'I know you were there!'"

Ken Alexander, manager of the Krider Performing Arts Center, serves as butler during the evening, keeping the dialogue running smoothly between the characters.

"He's the director of the evening," Ciarrocchi said. "He has an English accent that is very astute. He makes it very fun."

Ciarrocchi said the winery has hosted four Mystery Dinner Theater events so far. The idea was sparked about a year ago when a mystery tour bus operator contacted the winery.

"(He) brought a group of twenty-five people here from Alabama for a three-day tour," Ciarrocchi said. "I had this idea in the back of my mind and I thought 'I could do a mystery dinner for you.'"

The winery instituted the Mystery Dinner Theater as a monthly event earlier this year, and the reaction has been great so far.

"It's awesome," Ciarrocchi said. "It's so much fun. It's a full three-hour evening without having to go very far from home."

Each event includes a seven-course meal with soup, salad, entrees, coffee and dessert. As each course is brought out, a new scene begins.

The event costs \$65. Reservations are required and space is limited to 24 attendees. To sign up for the September and October events, call 644-9500.

After the October event, Ciarrocchi anticipates adding more Mystery Dinner Theater events to the schedule. The script will likely change once again after the October performance.

But the Mystery Dinner Theater is not the only way to enjoy Paris Winery. Its Concert in the Woods series has become a popular feature.

Ciarrocchi said the concerts usually feature jazz and easy listening music for a mellow kind of crowd.

"It's something kind of different," Ciarrocchi said. "You can kinda go hear other music anytime. We try to keep everything different."

She said booking the concerts last year was somewhat difficult, but it's been a much easier process with a year of experience.

"Last year it was harder because we didn't know anybody," Ciarrocchi said.

"This year, people come to me and offer suggestions and the (performers) refer people to me."

The winery also hosts lunches for groups of eight or more and dinners for groups of 12 or more.

Ciarrocchi said the winery often hosts lunches for several types of clubs and organizations, and

it can host weddings and receptions, class reunions and family reunions.

"The bistro can fit about thirty people inside," Ciarrocchi said. "After that we go outside."

She added that people are welcome to take a stroll through the winery's vineyards or bring a picnic basket and eat lunch among the winery's beautiful scenery.

Paris Winery is located at 2982 Harvey Bowden Road off of Highway 641 southeast of Paris.
For more information, visit pariswinery.com or call 644-9500.