

the tasting

What a Woozie!

BY LAUREN EBERLE

The story of the Woozie began — as many grand plans do — on the back porch of a beach house. Julia and Frank Sherron were sharing an evening at Topsail with their sons and friends when Julia, nodding to her warming wine, remarked that she wished she had a cover for her glass like the men had for their cans.

Before she knew it, the gears were turning. “I got up the next morning and began cutting apart material and researching the market,” Julia recalls. “I couldn’t find anything like it, and the more I looked, the more excited I got.”

A wine glass sleeve made from insulating neoprene, Woozies are stretchable, washable, and reusable. The product — which comes in a number of colors and designs — also features a drawstring, ensuring a proper fit for every glass.

“Like any start-up business, everyone has worn many hats,” says Frank, who partnered with Julia early on, offering business expertise from his career as the president of a community bank. One of



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the couple’s sons, Neill, joined the company too, becoming a director of sales and product development.

The work paid off. Woozie was a quick success at the Atlanta Gift Mart in January 2009, and even received national attention on the *Today* show a few months later. Since that time, the company has introduced customized pieces, cheeky Words of Woozie, a Big Woozie, a Wine Bottle Woozie, funky patterns and prints, a party pack, monogrammed Woozies, and even a pink ribbon product.

Frank and Julia maintain their offices in Moore County, while Neill and the rest of the team are based in a new facility in Raleigh. “We live in a truly supportive and nurturing state,” says Julia. “With the recent explosion of the wine industry here, it’s quite timely for us to have a product that fits in so well.”

Local wineries Duplin, Shelton, Childress, and Cypress Bend are just some of Woozie’s many custom partners. And although the Sherrons say the company has already grown beyond expectations, they’re still brimming with ideas, including the next new release: a champagne flute Woozie.

“We’re serious about having fun with wine,” Frank says. “That’s how we build everything in our business.”

“Wine is fun,” Julia adds. “And we’re giving you another reason to love it.”

For more information about Woozie, call 919-781-4441 or visit www.woozie.com.

WANT TO GET WOOZIE? We’re giving away a gift box filled with Woozie products. To enter, go to our website and fill out a brief survey about this issue. One random winner will be selected on August 31. Good luck!

CLASSY COOKING

BY KATHRYN COOK

Pizza and beer is a classic combo that rarely goes wrong. But when the dough is homemade, the pies are grilled, and the beer is local, the combo exceeds expectations.

This was the menu that my husband and I enjoyed when we recently attended Exploring North Carolina Craft Beers — a tasting class at Wilmington specialty kitchen shop The Seasoned Gourmet.

During the two-hour class, we tasted six beers while co-owners Randy Newton and Susan Boyles paired grilled pizzas and tasty hors d’oeuvres.

Slices of pesto pizza with fresh roma tomatoes were paired with Endless River, a clean, Kolsch-style beer from Kinston-based

Mother Earth Brewing. Grilled sausage and cheese was served with Asheville’s Highland Gaelic Ale — a malty, amber brew. And Wilmington’s Cape Fear Salsa was the signature ingredient for spicy black-bean pie.

“We try to bring in as much local product as we can,” says Randy, whose culinary background stems from growing up on his family’s farm in Rutherford County.

His wife, Susan, has also had a lifelong love affair with food. Although she spent more than two decades as a specialist for the Army, Susan preferred cooking for friends. “They always told me I was in the wrong profession, and eventually,” she says, “I listened.”

The couple realized their dream when they purchased The Seasoned Gourmet in

2006. With a focus on local and regional products, Randy and Susan stock everything from Susan Rice Black Truffle Olive Oil (from Southern Pines) to Carolina Coffee (Wilmington) to Pluto’s Organic Jamaican Jerk Sauce (Carrboro). What truly sets their store apart, however, are the cooking demonstrations and wine-and-beer courses offered several times a month.

“You can go almost anywhere in Wilmington and have wine or beer,” says Susan. “The educational style of the classes is what really separates us.”

The Seasoned Gourmet is at 1905 Eastwood Road in Wilmington. For more information, call 910-256-9488 or visit www.theseasonedgourmet.com.