

State Dinner Tuesday, Nov. 12
honoring His Excellency Dr. Bruno Kreisky,
Federal Chancellor of Austria

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Michigan wine

Leonard Olson, the 32-year-old founder and president of the Tabor Hill Vineyard and Winecellar, always dreamed of owning his own vineyard. So in 1968, he bought 45 acres of hilly, uncultivated land in Buchanan (Berrien County), quit his job in the steel business in Chicago, and moved his wife and four children to Michigan.

With the help of his family and a few friends, they used antiquated tools to plow the land, and that year, planted the first vines. They received their license in 1970, sold first bottle in 1972. In 1970, they produced 1600 gallons; in 1971, 3200 gallons; in 1972, 6300 gallons; in 1973, 11,000 gallons; and this year, more than 24,000 gallons.

There's a lot of family involvement -- his own family lives in a renovated farmhouse and helps with the day-to-day operation; and he has a brother and a cousin involved in the business part of the venture.

He hopes to see Michigan as the leading state in the production of high quality wine in future years.

(note: eastern shore of Lake Michigan has long been known for fruit production -- peaches, cherries and grapes. A number of commercial firms, not large but well-known locally, have been producing wines for years. But with a few exceptions, the grapes are American varieties. The Tabor vines are European variety.)

The trees which will be used

Officially, the trees are known as Ficus Benjamina (weeping Ficus) and Ficus Natida (standard, or roundhead, Ficus).

There will be four weeping Ficus (one in each corner) in the State Dining Room. Each is between 12 and 14 feet high. There will be four of the standard Ficus, also between 12 and 14 feet high, in the Foyer, where

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where the dancing will be. There will be four other standard Ficus, but smaller in height (about 8 feet), in the Grand Hall.

The weeping ficus are about 18 years old. The standard ficus are about 22 years old.

The tubs they are in are both square and round and were hand crafted in the White House carpenter shop. They are French in style and have a special finish -- a shade of green -- that was done in the White House paint shop.

The trees are on loan from the National Park Service. The NPS traditionally maintains ornamental trees that are used in White House decorations and for special events by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service.

Menu

May be of interest: This is the first time soup has been used as a first course since the Eisenhower Administration. Sherry will be served for use in the soup for those who wish it.

The dessert is a creation of Chef Haller and is a chocolate cake with whipped cream.