

Taste your way through Ciatano Winery

BY KRISTI RITTER

PHOTOS BY PAUL LITMAN

Vacation getaways don't have to involve days of driving to relax in comfort. With mountain adventures nearby, getting away to these backyard destinations can be done with ease.

Located only 15 miles from Longmont, Rock n' River Resort and Ciatano Winery makes for a splendid day trip or overnight adventure for the entire family. Nestled along the St. Vrain River, the 18-acre property captures rustic elegance with wine tasting, overnight lodging, lush gardens and ponds, a full-service spa, fishing for kids and a perfect setting to enjoy an afternoon picnic.

The property was originally homesteaded in 1882 by John Hall, a well-known local whom Hall Ranch – the preserved open space – is named after. Hall was a farmer and kept his crops in an old potato cellar that rests in the hillside. Today, the old cellar serves as one of Ciatano's aging cellars with barrels of their signature wines.

Twelve years ago, Dick and Mary Lou Gibson purchased the property, adding their own touches and family heritage to the resort. It was only five years ago that they started offering tastings of Colorado wines. A year later,



Rock n' River Resort with Ciatano Winery and La Bellezza Spa is located only 3 miles west of Lyons. It offers a little something for everyone, from fishing for the kids to wine tasting for adults. (Paul Litman)

they began making their Ciatano's family line of Italian wines after their daughter-in-law, GERALYN GIBSON, who now manages the resort and winery since their retirement last year, met a local wine maker.

The family's Italian heritage dates back several generations when Mary Lou's grandfather Donato arrived in the United States at age 12 from Italy. Wine making remained strong in the family, carrying through to today's generation.

"As far as the education of making wines, we just know what we like," GERALYN GIBSON says. "With our Italian heritage, we like the heavy red wines, but our No. 1 seller is our White Merlot."

The Ciatano family works closely with their wine maker,

having developed a strong working relationship that allows a marriage of such in helping to select the grapes and determining the wines for their signature lines. While many of their grapes come from the Palisade, Colo., area, Gibson says others are imported from the West Coast.

Ciatano wines are produced in Loveland, but sold at the winery and through their mail-order program. They'll also be available every weekend starting May 15 at the Lyons Farmers' Market.

"A lot of our visitors and clientele are from out of state, so once they experience our wine they want to be able to get it at their home," she says.

While the winery is a great stop for visitors on their way to Estes Park, it's also a place for residents to enjoy the





Check it Out

Rock n' River Resort is an all-inclusive getaway located only 3 miles west of Lyons at 16858 North St. Vrain Drive off Colo. Highway 36. Summer hours from May 1 through Oct. 31 are 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily for the tasting room and spa.



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La Bellezza Spa at the Rock n' River Resort.

entire day at the resort tasting signature wines, enjoying the grounds and gardens from the patio, seeing old wine presses and learning the ways of making wine, or enjoying a picnic packed from deli selections available at the resort. Kids can even take in the sights with playground adventures, hiking trails and fishing for trout in the ponds.

For guests looking for the ultimate in luxury, the onsite La Bellezza Spa offers massages, facials, a sauna, a hot tub and all-encompassing packages.

“We’re a family-focused, friendly atmosphere, and offer a little something for everyone for a perfect getaway,” Gibson says.

