



Bob Bolden, franchise owner and area developer ... Concentrating on increasing the number of members in the store's Wine Club.

Core demographic provides base of growth for WineStyles franchise

Bob Bolden started researching business ideas more than five years ago and discovered WineStyles, a franchise that specializes in wine, wine-related gifts, gourmet foods and craft beers that he felt would be successful in Omaha. So far he has been correct, with the store's sales increasing 12 to 13 percent annually since opening — touting a 23 percent increase year-to-date for 2010.

"It was a unique concept for the market," Bolden said.

Most of the wines the store features fall between the \$10 and \$25 range, with a section providing more expensive options. The wines are also categorized by color and flavor to simplify the wine buying process for the consumer.

The store also sells gift baskets, gourmet foods such as Tom & Sally's Handmade Chocolates from Vermont, shelf stable cheeses, gourmet spreads and crackers. Craft beers such as Belgian ales and Skruppy, a hard cider from Michigan, are also available. The store is located at 1110 S. 71st St, which is at the southeast corner of 72nd and Pacific streets. In addition to Bolden, WineStyles employs seven part-time employees.

Bolden said that the price point of the wines is one aspect of the business that has contributed to recent growth.

"With the economy, a lot of folks are purchasing less expensive wines," he said.

He added that the way the wines are categorized also appeals to the fast growing demographic of consumers ages 25 to 34.

The bulk of business, though, according to Bolden, comes from WineStyles' target demographic of women, age 40 and older who are well-educated and have a household income of \$70,000 or greater.

"This demographic purchases 65.8 percent of table wines," he said.

In addition to general retail sales, WineStyles offers membership to its Wine Club. A monthly fee of \$34.99 enrolls two people to receive two bottles of unique wines from around the world, recipes for pairing with the wines and other in-store benefits.

The store holds wine parties to distribute the wines, but can also ship them to members. One of WineStyles' current goals is to increase its membership from 375 to 500 within the year.

Other events at the store include a Ladies Night Out held on the last Thursday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. and a Styles Tasting held Fridays from 5 to 8 p.m. Various education classes also take place on a monthly basis.

Store hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and Sunday noon to 4 p.m.

In addition to owning the Omaha franchise, Bolden became an area developer for WineStyles within the states of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Colorado in 2007. Goals for Bolden within his development role include continuing to add franchises in all the states.

"I had wanted to be an area developer from the beginning, but corporate thought the state was too small," Bolden said. "After they saw the success in Omaha, they decided to give me a group of states where the population was less dense."

A second Omaha franchise was opened in July 2007 by Lynnette and Paul Barnes at 168th and Burke streets, according to Bolden, noting there is the capability to add three more franchises in the area. A Hastings franchise was also opened by Julie and Dave Oakeson last August.

Additional cities that Bolden would like to target are Lincoln, Grand Island and Kearney. There is also a franchise that opened in Denver in 2008. Overall, there are currently about 100 stores located across the country.

WineStyles' corporate office is located in Margate, Fla.

Bolden is originally from Chicago and has a bachelor's degree in business administration from St. Francis University in Joliet, Ill. He worked for food companies for 21 years, including spending four years as a plant manager for ConAgra in Omaha.