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Duo scores with wine-a-rita mix

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By **KIM PIERCE** / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Wine Glacé is a dry mix that you blend with wine and ice to produce a frothy, frosty, pink beverage mingling sweetness and citrus tang.

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It's not quite a frozen margarita – its distinctive color plays games with your mind – but it's got the fun and zip of one without the alcoholic smack-down.

That was the idea, says co-creator Donna Griffin, who developed the mix just over two years ago in Texarkana with partner Judy Smith.

"A lot of our friends were wine drinkers and margarita drinkers," Ms. Griffin says. "We were fixing to come up with something we could call a wine-a-rita. ... " They worked on the recipe with a chemist and a manufacturer, she says, and eventually got U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for the mix.

"We sampled it at the Texarkana Junior League show in November 2004," she says. It was so well-received, they knew they had a winner.

"It started as something we did at home," Ms. Griffin says. "Now, we do it full time. We have a warehouse, and we ship out on pallets in 18-wheelers."

Wine Glacé drink mix has proved so popular that it's featured in the summer International Wine Accessories catalog as well as on the IWA Web site. It's sold through 800 retailers across the country, and the women have a showroom at the Dallas World Trade Center.

Ms. Griffin and Ms. Smith met when their daughters, now college juniors, were in preschool together. Several years before the wine-a-rita quest started, Ms. Griffin asked Ms. Smith to work at her children's store in Texarkana. It was a good match: Ms. Griffin has a degree in accounting, and Ms. Smith's is in marketing.

After selling the store a year later, they started making bracelets. That business was still going strong when they got the idea for the wine-a-rita. They continued to make both jewelry and Wine Glacé mix until February, Ms. Griffin says.

"We decided we couldn't do this all day," she says, "and go home and make jewelry orders at night."



So now Wine Glacé has their full attention.

What's next?

"Everybody asks that," Ms. Griffin says with a laugh. "For now, we're going to concentrate on this and do this really well."

Kim Pierce is a Dallas freelance writer.

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WINE GLACÉ DRINK MIX

THE BASICS: It's sold in a 12-ounce package that makes 24 ounces of wine-a-ritas. You put 6 ounces of mix and 12 ounces of wine in a blender. Once they're blended, add ice and mix until frothy.

ROAD TEST: We used Osborne Solaz 2005 Blanco Viura for a base 'rita with a muted wine background; the emphasis was on sweet and tangy. For a more aggressively wine-driven version, we mixed the Wine Glacé with Osborne 2005 Solaz Shiraz-Tempranillo blend. This yielded a richer, deeper wine cooler with distinct berry undertones. The mix also works with fruit wines and for those who prefer unleaded fruit juices.

WHERE TO FIND IT: Wine Glacé is about \$12 at Flavors From Afar, The Connoisseur in Plano, and some WineStyles stores including McKinney, North Richland Hills and Rowlett.

ONLINE: www.wineglace.com