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Temecula Wineries' Pandemic Pivot

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, December 9th, 2020

Like so many industries, California's $114 billion wine industry has had to make a pandemic pivot. Not all wine regions are the same – and the Los Angeles-adjacent Temecula Valley region has had unique challenges.

Chief among them is Temecula's reliance on direct wine sales from its 40-plus wineries (the first opened in 1974). The region, about 85 miles southeast of Los Angeles, is situated amid numerous metro areas. The vineyards, restaurants and Old Town shops draw from about 22 million potential tourists – visitors who are now told to stay home because of the pandemic.

Tasting room tours, overnight stays, weddings and other wine tourism activities and events have largely been pared back, and sometimes eliminated, depending on pandemic orders. Numerous Temecula Valley workers and staff have been affected – overall, wine production generates 325,000 jobs in California.

Miramonte Winery / Photo courtesy of Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association

Virtual wine tasting events

It's not uncommon for Temecula wineries to sell 300 cases a week directly to tourists who visit tasting rooms. That's unheard of for central and northern California wineries.

With slashed traffic, Temecula and other wine regions have been relying on wine club sales and virtual tasting events, such as Temecula's "Sip at Home / Stay Home" program that ran in past months. NAPA Valley vintners created scores of similar events since late March.

As an agricultural operation, wineries are deemed as "essential businesses," and so are allowed to stay open for retail shopping, wine bottle and case purchases, online orders and wine club pick-ups. Some winery restaurants now offer take-out options since on-site dining and tasting rooms are temporarily shuttered.

Monte de Oro barrel room / Photo courtesy of Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association

Six Temecula Valley wines featured

Photo courtesy of Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association

Temecula Valley recently offered a virtual tasting event, with six wines featured:

• Carter Estate Winery's 2019 Estate Fumè. The wine's depth and complexity include rich tropical notes of guava and passion fruit along with a light caramel nuttiness, along with a faint smokiness.

• Doffo Winery's 2017 Syrah features a blend of violets, herbs, cherries, tobacco, vanilla – and a hint of smoke.

• Danza del Sol Winery's 2016 Super Tuscan – aromas of dried cherry, winter plum and Italian herbs.

• Miramonte Winery's 2017 Tempranillo – fruit notes of black cherry, raspberry and plum skin, along with a hint of fresh leather, sandalwood, tobacco leaf and vanilla.

• Wiens Family Cellars 2016 Reserve Syrah. The toasty aroma wrap-up: roasted rosemary, coffee and cedar.

• Monte De Oro Winery's 2008 Forty85 "Lost Gold" dessert wine. It's a combination of two late harvest grapes originally intended as a white port-style wine. The dessert wine has overtones of toffee, butterscotch, and caramel.

Temecula Valley's full list of wineries

Temecula Valley wineries / Photo courtesy of Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association

Top photo courtesy of Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association.

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