

Discussion thread from Support Virginia Wineries During COVID Facebook Group

**Winery affiliations have been noted below where known to provide context.*

Nancy Bauer

Admin · April 18 at 12:58 AM

QUESTION: What changes would you like to see when Virginia Wine Country reopens?

I was on a virtual wine tasting yesterday with a Virginia winery, and someone asked the winemaker/manager how long they thought it might take to get back to "normal". The winemaker said, essentially, that maybe there was a new "normal" that wineries may want to consider.

Their example was Saturdays, and the absolute zoo that they've become at so many wineries. Is there, maybe, a new way to do Saturdays?

Should wineries continue local deliveries?

Will we still want all these virtual winery events once we are free to move about? (And do wineries even WANT to continue them??)

The wineries offering to-go dinners on weekends paired with a bottle of wine, those seem popular - is that something they should continue?

We've had so much "new" in the last two months, and we have such a great opportunity to reset the "old".

What do you think?

[#vawinetogether](#)

Ashley Runkles Cottrell Absolutely continue to deliver—the best case anyone can make to trying out places far from them. As someone who considers winery-going a hobby, I would hate to not be able to visit, do a tasting with a human, and then sit to enjoy it. I would guess reservations are in our futures to limit how many people are on the grounds at any time and specific places to sit and enjoy the wine to continue social distancing. I just think the atmosphere of the winery, the story behind the wine/winemaker, and the hospitality add to the overall experience.

Michelle Elizabeth Continue free shipping when buying 3/4/6 bottles so you can try wine from places that are hours away.

Also as someone who works nights during the week I wish they would stay open late on Saturday not just Friday. Places closing at 5 or 6 pm when that's when you normally wake up makes visiting wineries difficult and exhausting. I know wineries are full on Saturdays and they have events on Friday nights to attract people but I feel like people loose out. Not everyone who enjoys wine works "normal" hours.

Connie Wood Spencer I agree - especially in the summer. Staying open when its later and cooler for cookouts and picnics would be great.


Melissa Mallen-Register I agree with both Ashley & Michelle... as one who loves to visit wineries, I am so craving a visit right now. Not much for virtual visitation, but if they could extend their hours, or even add a day... Which I know it's hard for some because they work and because of the staffing and or added cost, it would be nice If local entertainment Could be added at some places; or a mini festival could be held at certain Wineries... Maybe three or four wineries gather, on occasion.


[Teresa Morris Walker](#) I have never understood winery hours of noon to 5 or 6, especially on the weekdays. I get it in the winter but not most of the year. If they only want to operate 6 hours per day, why not 1 to 7? We love to stop in a winery on the way home from work for a glass but it's hard to do at most of them (and we are in NoVa).


[Melissa Gallo](#) Virtual tastings are cool but not affordable to do very many (especially for just two of us). I prefer traditional wine tastings & a nice environment to relax. I also agree with just making Saturday hours later (Creek's edge has later hours & I've gone there later on a Saturday to beat the crowd). Quite a few wineries in Ohio are open until 9 or 10pm. Wouldn't be hard to find people to work later hours.

[Cheryl Reamy](#) [The Hague Winery] [Melissa Gallo](#) we started doing Fridays later until 8pm last summer, June through September, along with a food truck, and that went over well and helped boost our local clientele.

[Cheryl Reamy](#) We had also partnered with a local farm and offered produce on the weekends too.

[Carmen Dare Crowder](#)  Following as a winner club manager I want to see what ideas everyone has. I agree with the open later during nice weather for our tasting room.

[Cheryl Reamy](#) Being at a winery far removed from the rest of the world () , we see traffic, but not like in other areas, such as Northern VA or Charlottesville. I personally love my busy Saturdays. We don't do delivery here because it just isn't feasible with the space between homes/county area. I think that if "larger" wineries continue to do delivery, it could potentially hurt those like us that cannot provide that service. I do like doing my weekly spritzer videos and I may continue to do those or something like them. I'm ready to see my customers and interact in person again. I don't think we would continue the virtual tastings. I'm not sure what the future for anything holds, so this could change. I love to go to wineries and get the full experience (there is a beauty and peace to them like no other), so I would much rather do that than have delivery or virtual tastings. We love having food trucks so we do plan to have them back when we're able. We've started doing oysters (uncooked, preshucked) to go again, so that is a start.

[Mary Vaughn](#)  I like the longer hours, but not just on the weekends, add a day or two during the week. Most wineries close at 5 during the week and I can never go as I am working

[Neila Wagner](#) Im really enjoying seeing the owners or winemakers during the virtual tastings and hearing their thoughts on the wines. I would like to see that continue once the wineries open back up.

[Kathryn Shroeder Rooney](#) [Neila Wagner](#) I agree. The virtual tastings expose consumers to wines/wineries which may be geographically more challenging to visit. Those combined with shipping deals might get wines in the hands (mouths) of people who might not otherwise get them.

[Ellen Berger Clark](#) Honestly, I want to be able to visit the winery and taste their offerings before I buy. But I will also support free shipping to give me an opportunity to try new wines from different locations. And I agree, reservations on weekends would be beneficial.

[Art Mitchell](#) Appointments would help. To varying degrees they do that in CA and it tends to cut down on the zoo like atmosphere. Limiting group sizes might help as well.

[Anna Want](#) [Casanel Vineyards] [Art Mitchell](#) we think appointment may be required at first. But we do by appointment for large groups anyways. And they would just show up. I dread dealing with sending people away because they don't have an appointment and the 1 star reviews that follow. We been dealing with it for years. If it becomes by appointment for everything it will be a difficult transition at first

[Art Mitchell](#) [Anna Want](#) agreed. You would almost need it to be a law or something so all wineries need to do it and you can shift blame! It is a law in CA.

[Anna Want](#) [Art Mitchell](#) yup. Everyone would need to enforce. Everyone would have to follow

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[Art Mitchell](#) [Anna Want](#) maybe just doing that on Sundays or something would be a start.

I prefer the wineries where the actual tasting experience of...[See More](#)

[Anna Want](#) [Art Mitchell](#) we are what you are describing. We have a staff of 4 on weekends usually at most. Most of our staff are WSET certified. Most are family members, including my sister and brother in law, our winemakers. Usually our tastings take 20 minutes on average due talking. When we get slammed it stinks because we have to move faster and bounce around. A part of us feels like trying by appointment might suit us better over all due to how small we are, but we know it will be a bear to enforce.

[Connie Wood Spencer](#) I get the reason for appointments. And I hate the idea. I love being spontaneous on A Sunday afternoon to go check out a winery we have never tried before. To be turned away because of no appointment would be a turn off.

[Art Mitchell](#) [Connie Wood Spencer](#) Also a turn off to have to wait for a while for a turn and then feel rushed so others can be served.

[Connie Wood Spencer](#) [Art Mitchell](#) True. Where is that happy medium?

[James F Koennicke](#) [Breaux Vineyards] Honestly, things like free delivery or free shipping were done out of necessity. While it may be nice to think about keeping them going once things gt back to "normal" they aren't sustainable in the long run. The virtual tastings though, that's an idea that may stick around if we can figure out how to keep the entertainment factor high. And if I don't go and blow thousands of dollars on equipment to make it "better". 😞

[Maggie Malick](#) [Maggie Malick Wine Caves] [James F Koennicke](#) I agree the shipping discounts combined with reduced prices were done out of necessity, but they're not a sustainable model. FedEx and UPS aren't giving us a break, we have to pay those shipping costs. I could see it as an occasional special promo; I belong to a West Coast club that does that. As for virtual tastings, I could see it for promoting new releases, but I still prefer tasting and interacting in person.

[Colleen Berg](#) [Fabbioni Cellars] [James F Koennicke](#) and [Maggie Malick](#) thank you!

Free shipping is not sustainable. Delivering is not either. Both cost and cut into the often slim margins. For myself we are just trying to keep our employees paid.

[Ed Cowdrey](#) [Castle Glen Estates Winery] If this is the new normal than we will see less than 100 of the nearly 300 va wineries close. Wine is a people business. It's not a "virtual" business. You simply cannot sell enough wine and do enough virtual tastings to sustain the business. The zoo is what attracts people. People like interacting with people. Just one owners opinion.

[Melissa Mallen-Register](#) [Ed Cowdrey](#) I agree. 99% of the time I like to taste my wine before I buy it!

[Faye J. Henry](#) I'm about the personal interaction for my Winery experiences. The temporary measures in place now are wonderful and appreciated. But these measures are not enough for me in order to expand my wine appreciation. I prefer - need - to explore beyond the wineries I've already established a working knowledge of based on onsite tastings. I agree that weekend wine tastings at most of my favorite wineries are jammed packed. Where there is only an indoor tasting room, it's a claustrophobic's nightmare jockeying to the bar. Those at the bar who clearly have been enjoying fine VA wines at other venues tend to be the ones who are too loud and too slooow to finish up so others waiting can then be served. BUT I will continue to patiently wait because I enjoy interacting with the wine stewards pouring for the masses to get their perspective on winery happenings and updates, coming changes, talking with others who are sharing the tasting with me exchanging opinions on the wines, offering my suggestions to first timers or those visiting from outside VA, etc.. At peak times, opening up satellite tasting stations either inside or outside, weather permitting, goes a long way to making the visit more enjoyable for everyone, including staff. Thanks to the exchanges of this FB group, there are so many more wineries I want to visit once I'm free to move about our great Commonwealth. ❤️

[Melissa Gallo](#) [Faye J. Henry](#) I agree with you. We love going to wineries, sitting outside, & chatting with folks but the crowds are overwhelming!

[Faye J. Henry](#) [Melissa Gallo](#) I find that if I can score a parking space, I'm in to the end. Also when there are larger turnouts, I try not to let those treating the pours as "shots" dampen my experience. ❤️

[Chris Piereman](#) Whether a virtual tasting, cooking class or the middle of the night boxing match with mother nature, virtual events give us insights into the life of a winery and the artists that make them live and breathe. These insights give a deeper appreciation of what goes into a bottle. Continue the virtual events of all flavors as they will be a part of the new normal.


[Michelle Haney Sanders](#) [Glass House Winery] The law has made some temporary changes to allow us to do some things during this time that we may not be able to continue once it is "over" (whatever over means). We don't yet know exactly what we will be allowed to do at that time. Please keep that in mind, and don't blame the wineries if we can no longer do things like pickups, deliveries, drinks to go, etc. We still must follow the law, which changes day by day right now, it seems.

[Christopher Karaffa](#) There are a number of wineries that I stopped visiting because they become amusement parks on the weekends. They have essentially retooled to become tasting assembly lines. But that's their jam. Good for them for pulling in the business. What I *will* criticize, though, is wineries that seem to go out of their way to make non-club members feel unwelcome. One place in particular I won't name had, during an outing I had with friends recently, three different comfortable spaces/large rooms for club members only, and one semi-heated outdoor space for non-members. It was in the 40s 😊 And the first thing said to us when we entered the building was, "Hi, are you wine club members?" Which leads me to the one thing I'd like to see in the "new normal": more attention to sitting areas. Every winery is set up to get people in and out of a tasting and buy bottles. Not every winery provides a great space to be able to sit and relax for a few hours without being right on top of others.

[Pam Barklage](#) Please don't change anything. Wineries are my happy place with friends and family, a place to destress and relax. If you have to make an appt, or keep group sizes down, that will ruin the spontaneity and fun. My favorite winery is open 7 days a week. Used to be open until 9pm every night, but then changed closing at 9 on Thurs-Sat and it's wonderful. I also don't buy wine unless I've tasted it, so a visit is critical.

[Cheryl Reamy](#) [The Hague Winery] [Pam Barklage](#) unfortunately, we may have to keep group sizes down based on what the law and guidelines are at any given moment. I have a feeling when businesses open back up it will be a slow and gradual process. Perhaps with the 10 person limit for a bit, then increasing gradually. I don't see a full blown open happening. With the 10 person limit, some more busy wineries may need to have appointments due to the size requirements and people waiting to get in.


[Melissa Gallo](#) [Pam Barklage](#) Same. If they make too many changes it will ruin it. The virtual tastings are a good idea but I feel they are better suited for a party. Not very economical for just 2 people (not in my budget). I'll keep buying individual bottles when I can.

[Andrea Feldman](#)  Id love to see more dog friendly tasting rooms or at least more places with outside tasting rooms. With all things equal, if one winery welcomed dogs and the other does not, I go where we're all welcome.

Also, for those of us with food allergies being allowed to bring my own food would be a big plus. If I can't sit and eat I tend not to stay very long. If I can eat my own food, I'm way more likely to buy a bottle to enjoy and a bottle to bring home.

[Melissa Gallo](#) [Andrea Feldman](#) same with me. I can't drink on an empty stomach and sometimes I just can't get lunch beforehand

[Art Mitchell](#) [Andrea Feldman](#) I'm a huge dog lover but they don't belong in a tasting room. Some people are allergic, some people scared, and some people don't have well behaved dogs.

[Andrea Feldman](#)  [Art Mitchell](#) you could say the same thing about toddlers...

[Art Mitchell](#) [Andrea Feldman](#) I do. And I have one. But the tasting room isn't the place for them.

[Art Mitchell](#) Outside in certain areas, all well and good.

[Christopher Karaffa](#) There's one winery we go to a LOT just for the off leash dog area

[Jordan Harris](#) [Andrea Feldman](#) I have found more adults to be poorly behaved than toddlers (not arguing toddlers to be allowed).

[Pamela Jean Cowdrey Muscari](#) [Castle Glen Estates Winery] [Andrea Feldman](#)

We allow dogs in our tasting barn.

Most wine enthusiasts know they can only bring well behaved and socialized dogs inside.

We have our own dogs who we endearingly call them "our greeters". We have a large loyal group of clients that come here repeatably simply because they enjoy seeing all the dogs that live here, or the ones that come and go.

On our website and social media pages, we “state” with pride how dogs are always welcome. We do this for those who may have a fear of dogs or allergies out of respect.

In addition, we have rescue days, and several charity events we do for our four legged fury friends.

The percentage of people who do not like this or agree is so small in comparison. I personally don't feel like I'm losing out on new clients. If anything, I believe because of our dog loving winery we have gained more than we could've ever imagined.

I sure can't wait to see these people and their pooches again.

[David Morrill](#) [Christopher Karaffa](#) Yep - that is a big decider where we go too.

[Floyd Oslin](#) [VA winemaker] Continue local deliveries

[Kenny White](#) [Chateau MerrillAnne] Without a doubt there will be no immediate transition back to business as usual. We will have to adjust our business model as government and common sense allow. Getting back to our normal style of operating will come in phases over a long period of time. When we are allowed to reopen we have to understand that the virus will still be active and be a threat. Consequently we need to conduct business in a way that will protect our customers and staff. Spreading out seating areas, lots of outdoor seating and controlling crowd size will be the norm. Flights may replace tastings for a while. Diligent cleaning by staff of all hotspots (door knobs, tables, counters etc.). Hopefully we will be allowed to continue deliveries and curbside as this will keep inside headcount down. We have to remember this isn't over when we reopen, we have to keep people as safe as possible. Just one winery owners opinion.

[Edward Lohmann](#) [Paradise Springs Winery] There maybe some adjustments to the way we all interact socially. The economic impact will be devastating for some...but the resilience of people to come up with new models and ideas the way to do business has yet to be realized. One thing for sure most governors are poorly prepared to cope with situations like this 🤔

[Barbara Jones](#) When I asked the question during a recent virtual wine event, they said that no changes were planned. I think that the income they get from the volume of tastings is to valuable to their long term success

[Edward Lohmann](#) [Barbara Jones](#) 🤔 each winery has to figure out what is going to work for them... they know...hopefully...know their clients 🤔🍷

[Barbara Jones](#) [Edward Lohmann](#) No doubt. I just think that the very valuable income stream and the need to recover from this tragedy will necessitate

[Evette Becker](#) Hi all! To add an idea that I don't believe has been said in this tread yet, I would love VA wineries to do more regular multi-winery events, which could include tastings, knowledge sharing, etc. Be it virtual or in-person experiences (once possible), seeing more wine makers, winery owners, wine club managers, etc. collaborate and celebrate each other through verbal promotion, topic-based round tables discussions that are open to the public/wine club members, tastings or sample bottle packs including wines from other local wineries (not already affiliated with their brand), and introducing new opportunities (ex. multi-winery transportation events sponsored by the wineries themselves) would be fantastic! Many Virginia wine lovers love Virginia wine from all over the state, so why not capitalize on that?! We're all stronger together 😊

[Art Mitchell](#) [Evette Becker](#) love it.

[Michelle Elizabeth](#) The Heart of Virginia Wine trail (Lake Anna, 53rd, Grayhaven, James River, and Mattaponi) does a lot of things together! They have festivals and discounts. Would love to see some other areas do something similar!

[Colleen Berg](#) [Fabbioni Cellars] [Evette Becker](#) great ideas But not possible with current abc rules for deliveries.

[Cindy Campbell](#) I've seen reservations/appointments mentioned a few times, but that implies a minimum purchase (which could be pricey per person) as well as a set time period (you cant stay and linger). Some of this is going to be hard to expect staff to enforce when people feel justified.

[Art Mitchell](#) I don't see why it needs to imply a purchase-though it should involve a fee for the reservation perhaps refunded if there is a purchase. The wineries would need people to show up. And in CA while there is a window, it's not generally strictly enforced.

I'd see the appointment for the tasting at the bar, not time on the grounds in a social area. If wineries have the space and property for people to linger or sit outside I don't see why that would have to be part of the tasting window.

Fighting for space at the wine bar while people chat with themselves and 'have a drink' is not, in my mind, what the tasting experience is about.

[Melissa Gallo](#) [Art Mitchell](#) agree! If you wanna socialize and relax wait until after the tasting and set up a spot in an outdoor or indoor space.

[Cindy Campbell](#) Do you all see how busy the Virginia wineries get over the summer? Unless there is a counter at the parking lot, you didn't specify a change?

[Art Mitchell](#) Exactly.

[Art Mitchell](#) [Cindy Campbell](#) what? Do you honestly think VA wineries get more visitors than those in Napa?


The appointment can be for a tasting at the bar. Call it 20-30 minutes. When you're don't tasting the range you can move from the bar to a picnic table or outside area. Seems pretty easy.

Better than 4 people hogging up 6' of bar space for an hour. The zoo atmosphere around the tasting area is what I think most people want to avoid. It's a tasting, not happy hour.

[Cindy Campbell](#) I am not lucky enough to compare Va vs Ca, so you have some great insight. I can speak to being a patron at nova wineries, which on a weekend can have busloadS of patrons brought in, every table and outside area are full up, there are waiting lines and slobbering folk and crazy busy atmosphere. Most weekends during the summer. I miss it already. Limiting the bar space and time will result in long lines, and still dont protect staff and servers well. But your idea will work for some wineries. That's the charm of them, they are all different.


[Renee Ventrice](#) Continued collaboration between wineries and restaurants!

Weekday wine delivery


[Leslie DiNick](#)  [Connie Wood Spencer](#) there is definitely camaraderie between wineries. Narmada, Granite Heights and Magnolia Wineries have banded together to promote a special on tastings. For \$20 you can purchase a card from any of these 3 wineries and get a tasting at each one. You just present the card and it gets punched. That's it. It averages out to buy 2 tastings get one free. And you don't have to go to all the wineries in 1 day. The deal was for an extended period of time. I'm sure there are other wineries doing the same thing somewhere. We do work together.


[Michelle Elizabeth](#) Oh and flights!!!! Love getting them at Aroma all the time (extension of Morais Vineyards) and had them at Cross Keys when I visited. I love not having to choose one wine! So many places have such great wines I don't know what to get, this way I can get them all!

[Amber Gunnoe Jodoin](#)  [Michelle Elizabeth](#) i love flights!!


[Amber Gunnoe Jodoin](#)  One particular winery has become an absolute mess at the tasting bar...kids sitting on the floor at the parents feet, and huge baby showers taking up tables, instead of renting rooms. This particular winery has an outdoor tasting area that never gets used, an up stairs for members only, and a downstairs, but no tables or chairs. I would like to see more wineries allowing outside food, or more food trucks.



[Joseph Kirrane](#) Flights are a great suggestion!! I love having the choice of a glass of wine or flight at [James River Cellars Winery](#) More wineries could add that suggestion!!


[Amber Gunnoe Jodoin](#)  I'd like to see more food pairings with tastings as well...doesn't have to be anything fancy..maybe throw in a truffle or two lol.

[Edward Lohmann](#) This is going to be an ongoing discussion not only here in Virginia but other states as well. States have realized that wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries provides an enormous amount of revenues as well as local community benefits such as employment and civic contributions. Additionally the farming industry which is feeding into these industries is also greatly affected. We will prevail 

[Alex Mann](#) There are a lot of really good ideas in here. Got me thinking, maybe wineries could expand digital presence online? For example, interactive streaming of winery tasks such as a virtual tasting on Twitch.tv (free platform) where live users can ask questions and interact with presenter or winemaker episodes on YouTube where various wines are spotlighted and the process of making said vintage is talked about in an interview style also showing and talking about details such as the tanks and fermentation process. I also think a general stream such as a 360 degree static shot or Ariel drone video of vineyard block on a sunny day would be a cool background to have in home while enjoying vineyards wine. Kind of like putting a video of a fireplace on the Tv to relax if one doesn't have a fireplace in the house.

[Brian Brumfield-Horner](#)  I'd like to see wineries hold back some of their vintages and let them age before immediately selling them. I think we are drinking our wines in VA way too young 2016 is what we should be drinking. Tho I know that's not possible because of demand and needing to make profits. So in turn wine makers make drinkable wine instead of age worthy wine. Don't get me wrong there is nothing wrong with young drinkable cab franc or Petite Verdot but they'd be much better off in 3 to 4 years. My two cents

[Edward Lohmann](#) [Brian Brumfield-Horner](#) good points and observations..one of the problems that wineries are facing is storage capacity...you raising a very important issue  

[Brian Brumfield-Horner](#)  [Edward Lohmann](#) Yes! At the few wineries I've worked at storage was one of the biggest problems. Where do you put all the wine to rest properly (temperature controlled environment \$\$\$). How do you afford and find space for more barrels? Money and lots of it, more than what most VA wineries make in a year which already gets invested into next years harvest.

[Pamela Jean Cowdrey Muscari](#) Our winery (Castle Glen Estates) will consider keeping the local deliveries going. They're actually fun, and the tips are nice 😊

[Shelley Magnuson Stevens](#) [Nancy Bauer](#) - given the difficult year, maybe we need to ask what we as customers / friends / consumers can do differently to support an industry we love. Kind of a "ask not what your country can do for you . . ." scenario. How can we avoid being a problem and become part of the solution?

Another thought. Have you considered an Executive Wine Pass? Increase the cost to maybe \$100-\$200. Benefits could include access to wines normally restricted, early/late access to tasting room, just some thoughts. Share profits from this pass with those wineries that participate.

[Adria Phillips](#) Makes it accessible to all for sure but I personally love getting on the road and going to a vineyard/winery, doing a tour if they have it. I love hearing the history, the smell and just getting out there. It will be changing times for many I think education as well will evolve with this. Online learning. I guess online tasting is cool but maybe they could ship tasting tubes because I wouldn't want an entire 20something bottle and not like it.

[Kristof Springer](#) I can understand not wanting to open several large bottles for a virtual tasting unless you were doing it with several people. CrossKeys, one of my favorite wineries. is selling mini bottles for their virtual tastings, this Friday's sold out tasting they are doing a Petit Verdot vertical, 2011, 2017 and barrel tasting of 2019, the previous one before that was their Cab Franc. They will do another one in the following week or two so you can keep an eye on their page for when they announce it.

[David Morrill](#) Some of the wineries have lovely grounds and the truth is that social distancing for a while is probably wise - I would love to see the seating spread out a bit on the grounds and to have stations set up where someone can buy wine without going inside. I am not necessarily suggesting tastings at these stations, but a lot of us know what we like. Could cut down on congestion in the tasting room. That said, I know not every winery has the staff or infrastructure to do this.

[Julie Bouchoux](#) I would love the continuation of local deliveries.