

Winery Ordinance Workshop Handout #1

Summary of Issues and Preliminary Conceptual Changes

Below is a summary of staff's **preliminary conceptual changes** to Santa Barbara County's existing winery ordinance. The purpose of the summary is to clarify key issues and provide background for the Matrix (Handout #2). These ideas are intended as a starting point for discussions during the winery ordinance update public workshops, a step along the way in the process. The concepts are based on public comment we received during our outreach and informal discussions with members from the wine industry and concerned neighbor groups.

Goals.

All of staff's recommendations are intended to be consistent with, and in support of, the following project goals:

- To improve efficiency in the winery permit process by clarifying ambiguities and simplifying concepts contained in the existing winery ordinance.
- To balance the needs of various stakeholder groups by recognizing the importance of agriculture in the County and ensuring wineries are compatible with surrounding land uses.
- To support the core principle that the primary use of the property is for the growing and processing of grapes. Tasting rooms and special events may be supportive of agriculture, but they should be clearly secondary and incidental to the primary use of the property.

Winery Ordinance structural issues.

- Bring progressive scale to the permit tiers by adding minimum premises size.
- Add minimum planted acreage requirements.
- Allow for small, start-up wineries and wineries not open to the public.
- Use letters, not numbers, to distinguish between winery tiers (Tier A, Tier B, etc.).

Tasting room issues.

- Create a new "Tier B" winery permit that allows for a tasting room with no special events.
- Change the definition of a tasting room to include private or "by appointment" tasting rooms.
- Exclude attached bathrooms or attached food preparation areas from tasting room size calculations.

Winery visitor issues.

Many of the existing neighborhood compatibility issues stem from the number of visitors on the property whether they are from winery special events, winery related activities that do not meet the definition of a winery special event, and simultaneous winery related activities. Therefore, staff recommends focusing on the total number of winery visitors at any one time. The following proposed changes address the total number of winery visitors:

- Lower the existing winery special event threshold from 80 to 51. If there are over 50 winery visitors at any one time, the winery special event requirements are triggered.

- Add new definitions for “winery visitor” and “members of the trade” and revise existing definitions for “winery structural development”, “winery special event” and “tasting room” to accommodate the suggested approach for winery visitation (see Matrix for details).
- Do not allow winery special events at a Tier A winery.
- Add winery visitation hours.

Benefits of this simplified approach include:

- Addresses events that do not meet the definition of a “winery special event”.
- Addresses winery related activities that occur at the same time on the winery premises.
- Eliminates ambiguous terms such as “private”, “general public”, and “wine club members”.
- Supports the concept of an “impact-focused” approach.
- Easier to enforce.

Tours and cooking classes issues.

- Allow tours and cooking classes on Tier B, Tier C and Tier D wineries consistent with the level of winery visitation.

Food service/food preparation issues.

- Allow food pairing with “finger food” at a tasting room.
- Allow the retail sale of pre-packaged food such as sandwiches in the tasting room.
- Do not allow meal service such that the winery premises functions as a restaurant.
- Allow only catered food for winery special events.
- Allow food preparation facilities that support the allowed level of food service and are compliant with food safety laws and regulations.

Monitoring and enforcement issues.

- Simplify monitoring and enforcement by considering the total number of winery visitors at any one time.
- Require a Conditional Use Permit (minor CUP for Tier C and major CUP for Tier D) for a winery special event. CUPs are revocable and give the County an additional enforcement tool to address repeat violations.