

# **SONOMA COUNTY VINTNERS**

## **COVID-19**

**Winery | Tasting Room**

**Reopening Framework Best Practices & Guidelines**

**May 4, 2020**





## **PURPOSE OF INTENT**

A prolonged economic shutdown poses significant and increasing health risks for our county residents, that include mental health, economic distress, family support and domestic conflict issues. These risks are dramatically compounded by reductions in healthcare access, food and housing insecurities and an overall perceived depressed economic outlook for the immediate future.

To protect the current and long term health of our community, a balanced approach is needed that allows our Public Health leaders the ability to mitigate both the transmission risks of the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing negative impact of the economic shutdown.

The following are suggested best practices and a regimented road map allowing county officials to safely reopen portions of day-to-day life in a measured approach that includes winery tasting rooms. They are intended to assist Sonoma County wineries in providing healthy and safe wine tasting environments for their employees and consumers.

The proposed approach outlined on the following pages allows for a progressive expansion of economic activity while upholding the highest possible physical distancing and transmission mitigation practices that can be regulated, enforced, and measured and modified, by real-time pandemic data and contact tracing.

## INTRODUCTION

Seventy percent of wineries in Sonoma County have recently reported in a wine community survey that they have been “significantly” impacted by the Shelter in Place mandate. These wineries rely heavily on Direct to Consumer sales, as well as On Premise restaurant sales, which have all been halted under this mandate.

## OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

- Communicate clearly and frequently with employees about the internal health and safety best practices that are required to return and remain at work
- Provide any relevant training and resources to staff to ensure successful implementation of health and safety best practices
- As best as possible, ensure you have the adequate protective equipment and cleaning supplies necessary to safely welcome any employees or guests.

## PROPOSED APPROACH

Tasting Rooms would be allowed to partially reopen, provided they implement, and activate a defined series of distancing and transmission mitigation measures. Steps to reopen winery tasting rooms need to be sensitive and effective to employee's health, and provide the consumer confidence for a safe and enjoyable experience. Supporting the Social Distancing Protocol set forth in Health Order no. C19-03 Appendix A, we seek to successfully design, implement, and sustain measures that:

- Protect employee health
- Protect customer health
- Prevent large group gatherings
- Adhere to social distancing guidelines maintaining a distance of at least six feet
- Prevent unnecessary contact
- Enhance sanitation practices

## REOPENING FRAMEWORK & BEST PRACTICES

The following are proposed best management practices to accomplish these goals. If adopted and adhered to, these would allow for the gradual reopening of winery tasting rooms.

These practices have been compiled into three categories: Employee Health, Consumer Engagement & Social Distancing, and Enhanced Sanitation Practices.

## EMPLOYEE HEALTH

1. Wineries can consider asking employees to voluntarily take their temperatures at home before the beginning of each work shift, and if elevated, voluntarily stay home.
2. Employees will wear face coverings during tasting hours.
3. Employees will adhere to all recommended social distancing protocols.
4. Employees will be required to wash their hands before and after each tasting session.
5. Assign one employee to be accountable for answering all telephone calls.
6. Wineries should consider assigning one staff person as their Covid-19 mitigation best practices activation person.

## **CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT & SOCIAL DISTANCING**

1. Tasting stations will be clearly marked and located at intervals of no less than six feet in order to comply with social distancing recommendations.
2. The use of outdoor tasting stations will be encouraged. These stations will adhere to the same social distancing and sanitation requirements.
3. The number of consumers will be limited by the number of tasting stations available.
4. Tastings will be offered by appointment only in order to manage the number of consumers visiting at one time.
5. All tasting area entrance doors will be propped open or opened by a staff member for entering consumers.
6. Tasting menus should be disposable.
7. When possible, wineries should utilize “contactless” payment methods.

## **ENHANCED SANITATION PRACTICES**

1. Covid-19 Information signage to be posted at guest entrances with winery / tasting area sanitation procedures posted at the door and or in designated outdoor tasting areas.
2. All County required signage and orders to be posted at entrance of all tasting and consumer engagement sites.
3. Regularly scheduled sanitization of all tasting room surfaces including doorknobs, light switches, tasting room stations, and bathroom fixtures at multiple and frequent intervals.
4. Hand sanitizer stations to be placed at tasting room entrance / stations to be used by all guests at entry into the tasting area.
5. Sanitization of all tasting stations at the conclusion of every tasting session.
6. CDC recommended signage placed in public restrooms reminding guests to wash hands.
7. Wine bottles to be handled by tasting room staff only with neck of the bottle not contacting the consumers glass.
8. Wine “dump buckets” to be removed, washed and sanitized at the conclusion of every tasting session.
9. Glassware used for each tasting session to be washed immediately upon conclusion of each tasting to ensure used glasses do not collect in racks or tasting area.
10. All tasting session glasses to be washed in commercial high temperature dishwashers that are monitored to operate at 180 degrees.

## **CONCLUSION**

These practices will allow our county officials to activate a progressive expansion of economic activity, while maintaining the highest possible safe social distancing and mitigation practices. It is our hope that by adopting this safe and controlled approach, Sonoma County’s wineries and tasting rooms, and our day-to-day lives will be allowed to safely reopen.