



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

David Morrison
Director

May 20, 2020

Michelle
Benvenuto,
Winegrowers of
Napa County

Michelle Novi,
Napa Valley
Vintners

Mike Carlson,
Coalition
Napa Valley

Molly Williams,
Napa Valley
Grapegrowers

Ryan Klobas,
Napa County
Farm Bureau

RE: COVID-19 and Winery Operations

The State and County response to the COVID-19 pandemic remains very fluid, as metrics and standards evolve to meet the ongoing health and economic challenges. Because of the rapidly changing circumstances, there have been numerous questions regarding the status of tasting rooms and marketing events associated with local wineries.

Yesterday, the State of California uploaded the Variance Attestation Report submitted on May 18, 2020, which moves Napa County into “deeper Stage 2” and allows operation of dine-in restaurants and certain additional businesses and workplaces. The “COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Dine-In Restaurants” issued by the State on May 12, 2020, allows for wineries to re-open under deeper Stage 2, only where alcohol is served in the same transaction as a sit-down, dine-in meal. However, the State website regarding County Variances (<https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap-counties/>) states that “Hospitality services, such as bars, wineries, tasting rooms and lounges” are not permitted to operate at this time.

Please be advised that the Napa County General Plan and Zoning Code prohibit dine-in meals, either directly by wineries or by contract with another vendor, and wineries and tasting rooms therefore do not fit within the guidance currently provided for counties in deeper Stage 2. Specifically, General Plan Policy AG/LU-13 allows only limited non-commercial food service, such as wine-food pairings, only when accessory to the principal use of the facility as an agricultural processing facility. Similarly, Napa County Code Section 18.08.370 limits wine marketing to events that are “clearly incidental, related and subordinate to the primary use of the winery” and Section 18.08.60 states that food service “may not involve menu options and meal service such that the winery functions as a café or restaurant.”

Napa County is actively working with its State and industry partners to allow wineries, wine tasting rooms, and other businesses as soon as authorized by the State as part of either deeper Stage 2 or Stage 3. I invite you to work with the County and its partners in this effort, and to communicate to your members that they should continue to refrain from food service, dine-in meals, and food trucks at this time.

Thank you for taking the time to allow for the County to share its current position on this important issue. If you should have any questions regarding any of the items listed above, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

David Morrison, Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services Department