

Winery gravitates to Dundee

By **BRETT TALLMAN**
For the Capital Press

DUNDEE, Ore. — Downtown Dundee is a construction zone.

At one end of town, the Newberg-Dundee bypass is nearly finished. At the other, orange cones protect freshly poured sidewalks that creep west along Highway 99W. Old buildings are being remodeled and new ones are springing up. At the west end of town, winemaker Cody Wright is washing barrels behind Purple Hands Winery's new facility.

"Cellar Ridge Construction finished the facility the last week of July (2016)," Wright said.

By the first week of August, Purple Hands had moved from an old farmhouse in the Dundee Hills to downtown Dundee. Just three weeks later, Wright started the 2016 harvest.

"We saw it as an investment in Dundee and where this town is headed," Wright said. "When we talked about where we'd put our tasting room, my wife, Marque, and I both felt like there was some-

thing special happening here."

Wright makes only 5,500 cases of wine a year. At that scale, he believes he is making the highest quality wine he can and markets it primarily by word-of-mouth.

"We're still small," he said. "By positioning ourselves on a main thoroughfare, we have an opportunity to have the brand spotlighted."

In addition to the location, Wright also thought deeply about the sustainability of Purple Hands. Cellar Ridge built the facility using recycled steel for the roof and reclaimed wood as siding. The interior is heated and cooled with efficient mini-split systems and plumbed with low-flow fixtures.

"I want to leave a light footprint," he said. "As a winemaker, a big part of that has to be running a low impact facility."

Wright is quick to point out that the decision also makes good economic sense.

"We power a 5,000-square-foot winemaking facility on \$200 a month," Wright said. "That's nothing."

Wright spent the first week of August bottling Purple Hands' 2016 wines. With one

vintage bottled up, he is turning his attention to the next one.

"August is almost like a meditation," he said. "I'm downloading and decompressing, making sure all my resources are prepped and my inventory is correct. That way I'm in good shape turning the corner into harvest. It's a good feeling because the last year has been a whirlwind."

If the whirlwind affected his wine, it doesn't show. Wine Spectator recently announced scores for the 2015 vintage. On a 100-point scale, Purple Hands wines from Holstein, Stoller, and Latchkey vineyards all received scores of 94.

"Since I started making wine, I've had five 93s," he said. "Never a 94."

From the 2015 vintage, only one wine in Oregon scored higher.

The first trucks carrying fruit from 2017 are on track to arrive in downtown Dundee by the middle of September. Dundee will still be a construction zone when they do, but Wright's chips are on the table.

"People are investing in this community and we're

excited to be part of that," he said. "Marque and I really believe that Dundee is going to be the premier wine town in the Willamette Valley."



The new Purple Hands winery and tasting room in Dundee, Ore.



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Cody Wright chose downtown Dundee, Ore., for the new Purple Hands winery and tasting room.