

# Specialized company gives barrels new life

By **GEOFF PARKS**  
For the Capital Press

Thomas Collet grew up in Louisiana and worked as a longtime forester, which explains his focus as the new owner of a wine-barrel refurbishing business south of Salem.

“I like wine,” he said, “but I love wood.”

Rewine Barrels began life about nine years ago as the brainchild of Todd Dollinger, a woodworker and staircase builder who successfully transitioned that 30-year career into the refurbishing of barrels for the Northwest’s burgeoning wine industry.

Dollinger, who Collet said “developed the business and invented all the processes” involved in restoring used wine barrels, retired last year. Collet, 65, then made his own career transition from the timber industry to the specialized work done at Rewine Barrels.

He said the business is structured simply, though the process requires use of Dollinger’s proprietary equipment alongside modernized methods to give new life to the used French, Oregon and other American-built white oak barrels. He said he currently restores about 2,000 barrels each year, mostly for small to medium premium wineries.

“The primary source of wine barrels used in this area is France,” Collet said, noting that first-fill barrels from that country can cost upward of \$1,400, with wineries replacing them “every three or four years.”

After the wine has been in new barrels for three to five years, he said, the oak flavors are “leached out and are no longer imparting any flavor.”



Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press  
**Rewine Barrels owner Tom Collet moves hoops on used French oak barrel in preparation for refurbishing work at his south Salem company.**

Prime season for his business runs from early summer to Christmas. Throughout that busy season, Collet evaluates the collected barrels, then takes the heads and bottoms off and sands the outside.

The barrel then is placed into a proprietary machine containing a router-like head that shaves 3/16th of an inch (and all the deep purple stain of the previous wine contents) from the inside. That process takes 12-15 minutes.

From there, a 400-degree gas flame blasts the inside of the barrels to “cook

out and toast” the wood surface for about 3-1/2 hours. The barrels then are filled with sulfur dioxide, a disinfectant, and are wrapped in plastic to keep them fresh until arrival at their winery destination.

Turnaround time from start to finish is about two weeks, Collet said.

“Nothing goes to waste” during the refurbishment process, he said. Tailings left over from the shaving of the purple-colored oak on the inside of the barrels are sold for use in barbecues.

Unused oak staves are repurposed and



Geoff Parks/For the Capital Press  
**Alex Cortez, left, and Rewine Barrels owner Tom Collet work on a French oak barrel.**

sold as Collet’s proprietary “Oak Dips.” They infuse the desired oak taste to lower-cost red wines that did not age in barrels as long as their higher-cost cousins.

“We want to squeeze everything we can out of the resource,” Collet said. “We’re trying to extend and preserve the resource because these trees are 120 to 160 years old.”

**MagnumVines™**  
Tons and Tons of Reasons

- Ultra Clean Rootstock
- 100% Containerized
- 291 Certified Virus Free Clones
- 2010 Protocol Selections

Clean Plants For Your Future

**DUARTE**  
TREES & VINES

Clean, Clonal, Containerized

503-435-8932

www.duartenursery.com • OR/WA • sales@duartenursery.com

V19-1/110

**2019 TRX250™ RECON**

- BIG RACKS • 5-SPD MANUAL SHIFT
- ELECTRIC START • 12 MONTH WARRANTY

**SALE PRICE \$3,899**  
MSRP \$4,199

**TAYLOR** **honda sports**  
MOTORCYCLES, INC. STK #01750

Serving Farms & Ranches for 55 Years - 1964-2019

**YOUR AUTHORIZED FULL SERVICE DEALER**

Tons Of Accessories • Easy Financing  
• Full Service Dealership • Complete Line Of Honda ATVs

2140 N. Pacific Hwy. 99E • Woodburn, OR • Open 8-6 Tues-Sat.  
**(503) 981-1813 • 800-981-1813 • www.taylormotorcycles.com**

honda.com UTILITY ATVs ARE RECOMMENDED ONLY FOR RIDERS 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER. ATVs CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO OPERATE. FOR YOUR SAFETY, BE RESPONSIBLE. READ THE OWNER'S MANUAL. ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET, EYE PROTECTION AND PROTECTIVE CLOTHING. BE CAREFUL ON DIFFICULT TERRAIN. ALL ATV RIDERS SHOULD TAKE A TRAINING COURSE (FREE FOR NEW BUYERS. ASK YOUR DEALER OR CALL ASI AT 800-887-2887). NEVER RIDE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, ON PAVED SURFACES, ON PUBLIC ROADS, WITH PASSENGERS, OR AT EXCESSIVE SPEEDS. NO STUNT RIDING. RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT WHEN RIDING. TRX is a registered trademark of Honda Motor Co., Ltd. (12/17) \*Neither MSRP nor Price includes \$400 in destination charges. Visit powersports.honda.com to view applicable destination charge amount. V19-1/106