

Wine & the City

**Eugene's Urban Wine Circuit
hits full bloom with its first Barrel Tour**

BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

Many a romantic notion is attached to wine, like zooming past the city limits, wind in your hair and finding a sunny patio nestled into the rolling hills of a country winery where you can sip vino and take in the vistas.

Eugene, however, has more tasting rooms in the city than ever before, easily reached by foot, bike, bus or a short drive. In 2013, a few members of the South Willamette Wineries Association (SWWA) started the Urban Wine Circuit, a group of six wineries and tasting rooms that want to “bring the wine country experience into town,” and host wine walks twice a year.

On June 6, the SWWA hosts its first Barrel Tour of the Urban Wine Circuit, in addition to the annual Northern Tour June 13 and Southern Tour June 20. A deluxe charter bus will pick up participants at Valley River Center and shuttle them along the circuit, where each stop will serve three food and wine pairings and a special tasting straight from the barrel. See southwillamettewineries.com for tickets.

Aside from the Barrel Tour, the stops on the Urban Wine Circuit regularly showcase local music and food trucks, as well as provide ample event space for nonprofits, weddings and other functions. Their patios will also be a hotspot for Mother's Day May 10 and Memorial Day weekend. *EW* caught up with the circuit members to find out what drew them to town and what they offer our fair city.



**JONATHAN OBERLANDER OF
J. SCOTT CELLARS IN THE BURGEONING
WESTSIDE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT**
PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTA

J. Scott Cellars

In 2014, the small boutique wine producer J. Scott Cellars opened its tasting room across the parking lot from Noble Estate in the Westside Warehouse District, an up-and-coming area that also includes Crescendo Organic Spirits, Claim 52 Brewing and Viking Braggot Company, with which J. Scott shares a wall.

Inside, wine barrels are stacked high and the Oberlanders have curated two murals — one a faux Tuscan-villa façade, the other a four-panel scene of rolling wine country.

Owned by Bonnie and Jonathan Oberlander, J. Scott Cellars focuses on “Rhone varietals from the Pacific Northwest,” including roussanne, viognier, petite sirah, syrah, cabernet and a little pinot.

Jonathan Oberlander, who used to make wine for Sylvan Ridge, says there are two reasons he chose the west Eugene location. “I’ve made wine in the country for a very long time. From a practical standpoint, it made sense to do it in town,” he says. “It’s functional for the mechanics of making wine,” adding that he now has access to “good, clean city water.”

The second reason is that it’s closer to his home and the homes of potential visitors. “There’s a lot of people who live in the south hills,” he says.

On July 18, J. Scott Cellars will join the rest of Westside Warehouse District for its 2nd annual block party, which Oberlander estimates more than 800 people attended in 2014. “It’s really beneficial to share resources,” he says.

J. Scott Cellars’ tasting room is open 4 to 9 pm Fridays and 1 to 9 pm Saturdays at 520 Commercial St., Suite G. Hours will expand after Memorial Day. For more info, call 357-5279 or visit jscottcellars.com

Territorial Vineyards

Located at the corner of 3rd and Adams, Territorial has become a bit of a hub for its French oak-barrel-aged pinots, which it makes onsite, and rowdy live music inspiring impromptu dance parties. In the summer, the patio fills with people sipping and noshing, and come August, it marks the northeastern edge of the Whiteaker Block Party. During winter, the tasting room’s wall of windows glow with warmth, beckoning passersby to saunter in for a glass.

When co-owner Alan Mitchell was first trying to open a winery in 2001, he was looking at a rural plot outside Junction City. “We were vineyard people long before we were wine people,” he says. “That’s the first thing you think of is, put it out in the country.” He quickly learned that would be “bloody expensive” and purchased the then-vacant 12,000-square-foot Boyd’s Coffee Warehouse.

“We were able to come into this place and basically build the dream winery on a blank canvas just the way we wanted,” he says. “At the time an urban winery was kind of an oddball thing to do in this country. It’s not that unusual if you look at the world.”

Mitchell says the neighborhood has changed since Territorial put down roots, undergoing a boom of “alcohol purveyors.”

“The Urban Wine Circuit is hopefully a constructive part of that,” he says.

Territorial Vineyards and Wine Company’s Wine Room is open 5 pm until late Wednesday through Saturday at 907 W. 3rd Ave. For more info, call 684-9463 or visit territorialvineyards.com

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