



Long Meadow Ranch opens Anderson Valley tasting room

By Stacy Briscoe

In 2015, Long Meadow Ranch purchased 69 acres of vines in Anderson Valley, planted to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris.

Today the company, which also owns estate vineyards in the Mayacamas Mountains and Rutherford in Napa, a cattle ranch in Marin County, and recently acquired Stony Hill Vine-

yard in the Spring Mountain District of Napa, produces about 8,000 cases from its Mendocino County vineyards.

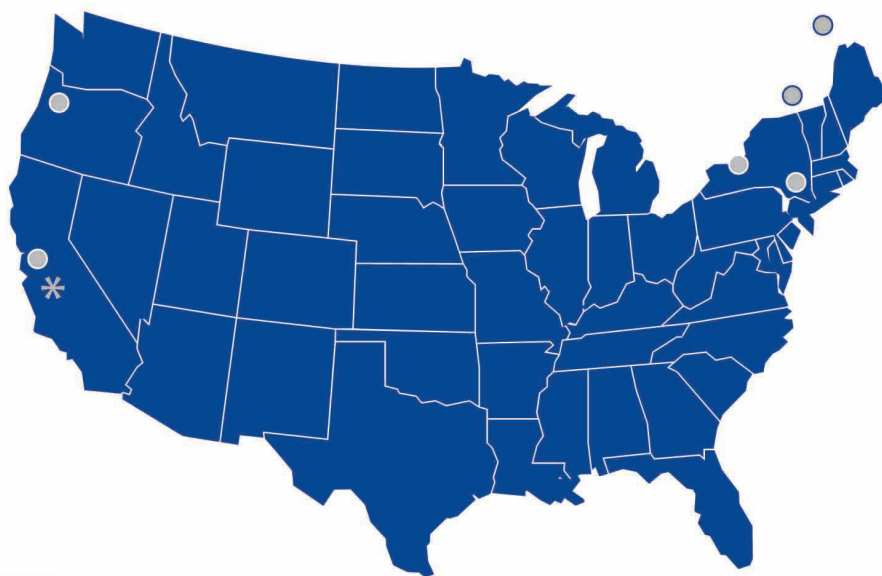
In July 2018, Long Meadow Ranch celebrated the grand opening of its new Anderson Valley tasting room, located at The Madrones in Philo, Calif.

“From the moment we acquired the estate in 2015, we knew we wanted to also have a place for visitors to taste our wines and experience Long Meadow Ranch hospitality close to our estate vineyard,” said tasting room manager Mark Mendenhall. “As soon as the opportunity presented itself

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at The Madrones, we knew this would be perfect.”

Mendenhall said The Madrones was an “obvious choice” for the tasting room, calling it a “fun and vibrant corridor” of Philo. Plus, the winery’s new estate, Tanbark Mill Vineyard, is just a few miles away from the tasting room. “Being so close to our estate makes the connection and the experience for our guests more compelling,” Mendenhall said.

The Madrones, a boutique resort that includes accommodations, a restaurant (Stone & Embers), as well as two other tasting rooms (Drew Family Wines and Smith Story Wine Cellars), is already a destination for visitors to the somewhat remote Anderson Valley. Mendenhall said sharing the space with other businesses has the added benefit of building a community within the local wine, food and hospitality industries, where they can promote each other and share a common target audience.

A place for Pinot

According to Wines Vines Analytics’ winery database, prior to the new tasting location, Long Meadow Ranch conducted about 30% of its business through direct-to-consumer (DtC) sales. Though the tasting room has been open for just over a month and the team can’t comment on the specific metrics of its business, Mendenhall said Long Meadow Ranch has already seen a boost to its DtC sales. “A number of Anderson Valley wine enthusiasts have been coming in to check out what Long Meadow Ranch has to offer. We are very happy with the positive feedback,” he said, adding that they’ve seen the highest interest and response to the venue’s sit-down tastings, which incorporate Long Meadow Ranch’s farm products and provisions.

Mendenhall said Pinot Noir is the winery’s best seller across the board — both in DtC and three-tier distribution. “Anderson Valley, and in particular our Tanbark Mill Vineyard, is a special place for growing world-class Pinot Noir with its cooler climate,” Mendenhall said. Guests of the new Madrones tasting room can enjoy five expressions of Pinot Noir grown on Long Meadow Ranch’s newest estate: Pinot Noir blanc, Pinot Noir rosé, Pinot Noir and two specific soil selections of Pinot Noir.

Staff training

In addition to Mendenhall, Long Meadow Ranch’s tasting room employs two part-time staff members. When hiring, Mendenhall says, he looks for people who embody hospitality and who understand and can provide excellent customer service. “We love to train on our fundamentals and specifics, yet that core of hospitality is key to success,” he said.

Staff is rewarded financially for any sales and for signing up wine club members. Mendenhall said the key to retention and longevity

of wine club members and/or repeat customers is communicating with members in a personalized way and enhancing their experiences in the tasting room. “We encourage and train our staff to give a thoughtful, educational and professional guest experience,” Mendenhall said. “We don’t really have any ‘tricks.’”

Tools of the trade

The Long Meadow Ranch tasting room uses a Perlick wine cellar to store all wines served to guests and a True Merchandiser fridge for all beverages, both wine and non-alcoholic,

sold on-premise.

The tasting room serves wine in “The One” stemware by Andrea Robinson and keeps Riedel decanters on hand to use “as needed,” though Mendenhall says they do not use them on a daily basis. All glassware is washed in a CMA commercial glass-washing machine.

Guests to the tasting room can also enjoy espresso drinks, featuring a custom Stumptown Roasters Organic Farmstead blend, made with a La Marzocco espresso machine.

Long Meadow Ranch uses WineDirect as its point-of-sale (POS) software and Base CRM. 🍷

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