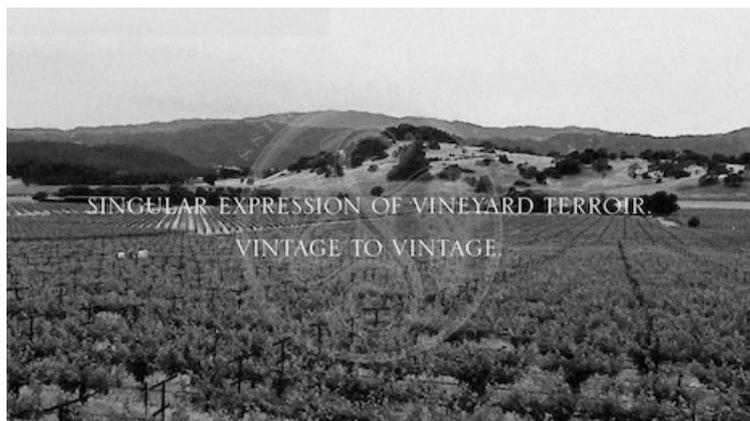


FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Stones Wine focuses on digital connections in pandemic times to help rebuild cellars

July 27, 2020



Stones Wine focuses on helping wine collectors buy top-shelf wine. Image credit: Stones Wines

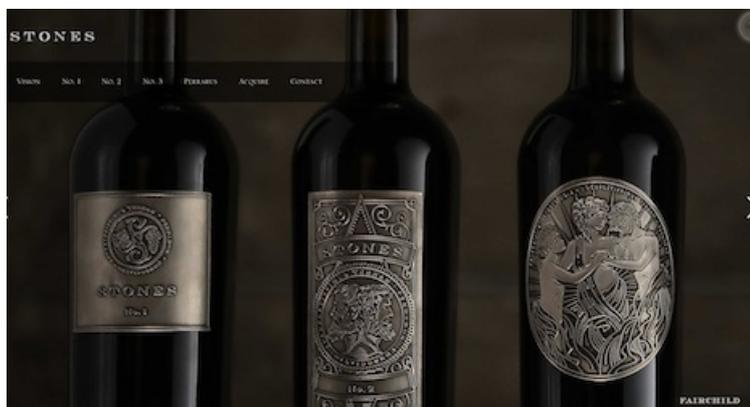
By DIANNA DILWORTH

Stones Wine has been adapting to the impact of closed vineyards by engaging clients digitally to help wine collectors rebuild their cellars as COVID-19 has created a boost in online sales.

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The brand has always been a high-touch, luxury tier wine vendor, a kind of Herms or Louis Vuitton of Napa wine. The vineyard has been focusing this service mostly online since the pandemic hit.

"The limitations on both visitors to the Napa Valley and our business practice of two and three Michelin client dinners in New York, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and other cities has had an impact on our sales, but thankfully only moderately," said Lawrence Fairchild, owner of **Stones Wine**, Napa, CA. "We have a very loyal following for the Stones and Perrarus wines."



Stones Wines' No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. Image credit: Stones Wines

Wine collections

During lockdowns, online wine sales increased as people drank more at home when they could not go to restaurants and bars.

Many wine collectors began to make the best of their time at home by enjoying some of their collections.

"Drinking wine at home has replaced restaurant wine consumption, therefore the increase in direct sales," Mr. Fairchild said.

"Our collectors want the unusual, the unique bottles from great vineyards and winemakers that do not make it to the retail shelves," he said.

"Cellars, due to the crisis, are being depleted at a higher rate than ever, allowing collectors to find and replace their empty space with seldom seen offerings and bottles."

Other collectors have begun to sell their collections, in response to stock market dips and increasing economic uncertainty.

"Restaurants with great wine cellars, in the absence of dining customers, have resorted to presenting offerings from their collections, a rare opportunity to access wines normally only available to restaurants," Mr. Fairchild said.

"Also, economic pressure in Europe has allowed for some great pricing on some European wines," he said.



Stones No. 2 was created in one of the most coveted growing areas in Napa Valley. Image credit: Stones Wines

Digital marketing

Stones and Perrarus have always focused on the exclusivity and luxury of the products, delivered in exquisite packaging to clients.

In the current environment, Stones is keeping up well-designed hard-copy communications and marketing to collectors digitally.

"We are constantly, even under the current environment, reinventing and redesigning for the future," Mr. Fairchild said.

Perrarus 2, the company's hand-blown glass edition considered the most exclusive and rare wine in the United States, with only 350 bottles available will release in September by lottery and will include a special invitation featuring "The Art Series".

"It is important for us to stay connected with our special collectors during this time and provide them the best wine offerings in the world," Mr. Fairchild said.

Because Stone and Ferrarus are very design- and image-driven, platforms such as Instagram and email that allow the brand to connect collectors in the digital space are put to optimal use.

"We have a team that continually populates our select platforms with content and imagery, both product and culturally relevant that we feel helps express the brand and our feel for the times," Mr. Fairchild said.

Regardless of the pandemic, wine collecting is expected to continue to increase in 2021.

"There will be a significant replenishment of cellars," Mr. Fairchild said.

"Collectors though, will be more discerning in my opinion," he said. "Quality and exclusivity will always be the driver in the world of luxury tier wine. Consumers have great palates and deserve great wines."

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