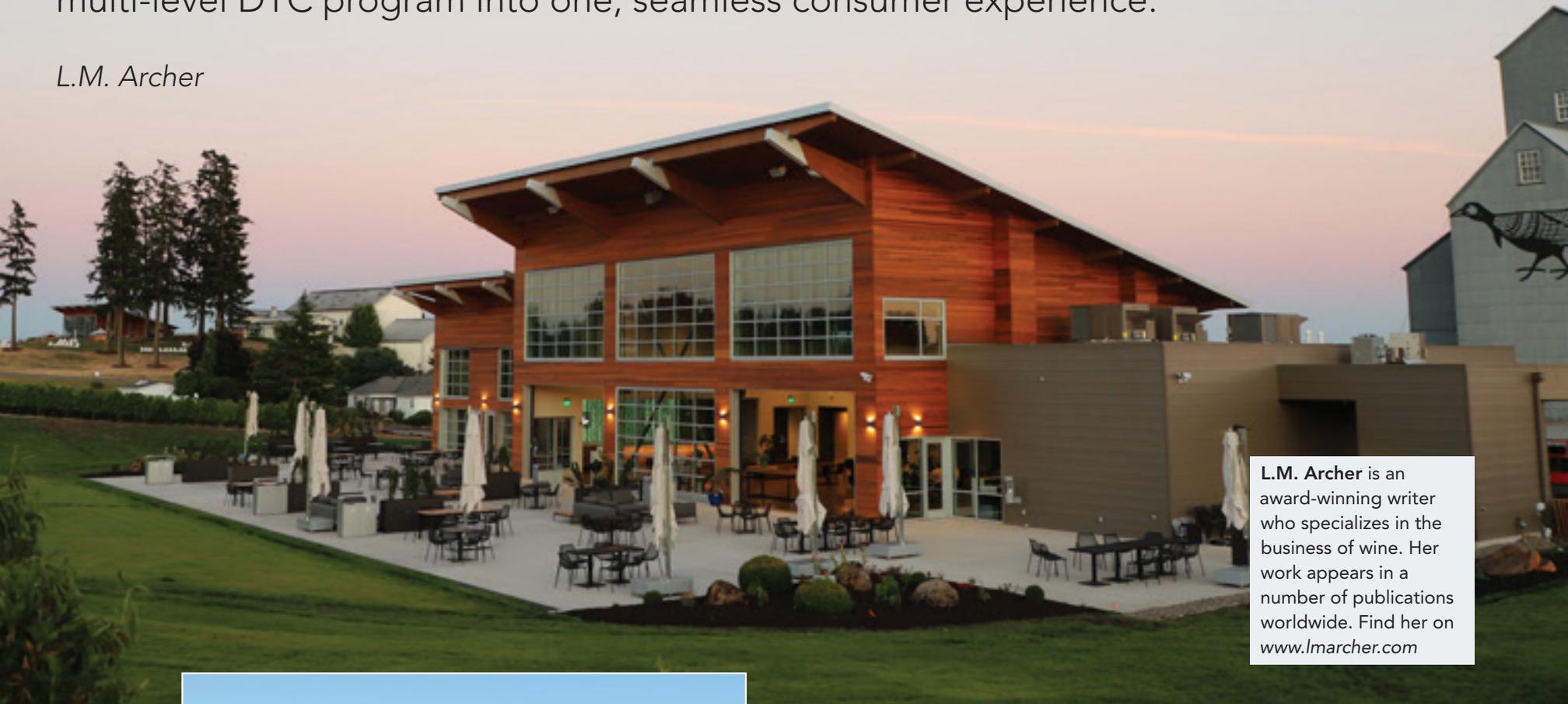


Technical Spotlight: Stoller Family Estate Brings the Winery “Experience” to a New Level

Stoller Family Estate in Oregon’s Willamette Valley shares secrets to streamlining a multi-level DTC program into one, seamless consumer experience.

L.M. Archer



L.M. Archer is an award-winning writer who specializes in the business of wine. Her work appears in a number of publications worldwide. Find her on www.lmarcher.com



AS COVID CUTS LIKE a knife through conventional direct-to-consumer (DTC) programs, wineries are scrambling to survive. But in Oregon, Stoller Family Estate is standing out for its nimble, multi-level DTC response. The secret? A combination of business savvy, high-touch hospitality and high-tech innovation. “Consumer trends are changing as more and more people are using their digital devices to connect and access meaningful information about businesses they support,” stated Michelle Kaufmann, communications director for Stoller Family Estate. As a result, Stoller’s powerful DTC program comprises a savvy assortment of traditional, not-so-traditional and flat-out envelope-pushing strategies—plus a few pandemic pivots.

It appears this multi-pronged approach works. *USA Today* awarded Stoller Family Estate the coveted “10 Best Tasting Rooms” award in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Community

The secret to Stoller Family Estate’s DTC success begins with community. Stoller Family Estate owner and founder Bill Stoller inherited his love of community. Back in 1943, Stoller’s family bought a turkey farm in the Dundee Hills of Oregon’s Willamette Valley. At its peak, the farm was among Oregon’s largest, boasting almost 700,000 free-range birds.

By the time the family sold the turkey farm in 1993, Stoller already owned a successful nationwide employment placement company. But his small-town community roots pulled at him. So, in 1988, Stoller invested in Ridgecrest

Stoller
FAMILY ESTATE



BOTTLE BUY BACK

GUARANTEE

We stand behind our DS100 Inspection Process. If you receive a cork taint claim on any bottle sealed with our 100% Inspected DS100 Natural Cork, we will buy the bottle back.*



* OUR LABORATORY WILL TEST BOTH THE WINE AND THE CORK TO DETERMINE IF TCA IS PRESENT AND AT WHAT LEVEL. IF WE FIND THE BOTTLE TO HAVE TCA PRESENT AT GREATER THAN 1.0 NG/L, CORK SUPPLY WILL REIMBURSE THE WINERY FOR THE RETAIL RELEASE PRICE OF THE WINE.

Stoller Family Estate Brings the Winery “Experience” to a New Level

Vineyards on Ribbon Ridge and in 1993 he bought the family farm as well as co-ownership in Chehalem Winery.

Stoller’s initial goal when he purchased the turkey farm was centered around planting a world-class estate vineyard for Chehalem Winery. To do this, Stoller enlisted several notable experts, like Burgundian Patrice Rion, to design the initial 10 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. But as the Dundee vineyard matured, so did his business model. By 2000, Stoller developed plans for his own winery and launched Stoller Family Estate in 2001.

Initially, Stoller produced a few hundred cases of wine for a small circle of friends and family. But it turned that out fruit sourced from his Dundee estate and pressed at Chehalem Winery proved a winning combination. Soon, Stoller’s growing popularity outpaced his makeshift facilities.

Sustainability

Unexpected brand demand prompted Bill Stoller to construct his own winery. From the start, Stoller set his sights on sustainability. “I believe that when you build something, you do it for a sustainable reason,” he noted. “I wanted to build a company that could last at least 200 years, and to do this, we must take care of our land and community.”

Stoller made good on his promise. In 2006, Stoller Family Estates unveiled the world’s first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold-certified winery. The gravity-fed production facility meets rigorous LEED sustainability building design and construction requirements. These include third-party verification of improved performance in energy savings, water efficiency and indoor environmental quality. Other metrics measure reduced CO₂ emissions, stewardship of resources and mindfulness of overall impacts. Stoller also claims fame as the first Northwest winery to produce solar energy. More than 1,200 solar panels mounted on south-facing roofs generate enough power to keep the winery energy-neutral. In addition, an energy-efficient, computerized lighting control system manages a network of switches, motion sensors and timers.

The winery also installed an energy-efficient heating and cooling system. Other design applications exploit natural ventilation. A below-grade barrel cellar harnesses the earth’s natural cooling capacity while catacombs draw in



STOLLER FAMILY ESTATE

The digital display allows guests to learn more about the vineyard via maps and drone footage.



STOLLER FAMILY ESTATE

Using Oculus virtual reality headsets, guests travel back in time to the geological moments that defined the earth they’re standing on.

nighttime air. At the time of completion, Stoller recycled nearly 96 percent of the winery’s construction waste initially destined for landfills.

That same year, the vineyard also earned Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE) certification; the winery followed suit in 2009. LIVE partners with Salmon-Safe and Oregon Tilth to mitigate water run-off and erosion detrimental to water quality throughout the property. To that end, Stoller collects winter run-off into a reservoir for irrigation use during exceptionally dry years. Moreover, the estate composts all its waste on-site for reuse in the vineyards.

Over time, the vineyard expanded from 10 to 225 acres. Today, Pinot Noir comprises 70 percent of the total vines planted, Chardonnay 25 percent and other varieties, such as Aligoté, Gamay Noir, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier, Riesling, Tempranillo, Syrah and Viognier the remaining 5 percent.

Ever mindful of the future, Stoller continues to conduct long-term experiments aimed at unlocking the vineyard’s potential. Concurrent collaborations with Oregon State University viticultural researchers deliver useful thought leadership to the state’s wine industry. Stoller employs other technical advances, such as specialized weather stations to gather real-time vine sensory data and mechanical, “herbicide-free” weeding.

Furthermore, in keeping with the tenets of sustainable certification, the vineyard has cover crops and wildflowers to encourage helpful insects. Master Gardener Corrine Gosnell oversees what Kaufmann calls a flowing “river of biodiversity” throughout the property, from bird and wildlife habitats, to insect-friendly cover crops. And consultations with the Xerces Society on best practices help preserve a “pollinator highway,” from the top of the vineyard to its most remote western corners.

“Our estate is home to one of the largest private oak savannas in the Pacific Northwest, part of our dedication to preserving ecology restoration areas for indigenous plant and wildlife,” stated Kaufmann. “Fallen oaks are re-purposed for bird boxes to encourage natural predation.”

This second cornerstone of Stoller’s DTC program—namely an unwavering commitment to sustainability—resonates with consumers. But selling more wine requires more space. In 2012, Stoller constructed a net-zero tasting room adjacent to the original winery. The airy tasting room radiates Stoller’s trademark friends and family vibe. Again, sustainability informs every detail, from salvaged timber cladding and “green roofing” planted with vegetation, to electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

NĚSTGATE™

CONNECTED CLOSURES

Get closer to your consumers



NĚSTGATE: it's all in the name. A comprehensive range of connected caps with the power to open doors to new and exciting digital relationships between brands and consumers.

Discover our range of connected closures for wine, spirits and olive oil on www.nestgate-gualaclosures.com or contact us at Email info@gualaclosuresNA.com | Tel +1 707 425 2277



**WORLDSTAR
WINNER 2020**

 *Guala Closures North America*



STOLLER FAMILY ESTATE

On a 100-million-year journey across time, Oculus users at Stoller Estate watch as tectonic plates shift, volcanoes erupt, and dinosaurs roam the earth. The VR experience tells the story of the soil and how it came to shape the estate vineyard.

Unsurprisingly, Stoller’s commitment to sustainability doesn’t stop there. In 2017, Stoller Family Estate earned B Corp Certification. Certified B Corp businesses must follow high standards of verified social and environmental performance, as well as public transparency and legal accountability.

Innovation

While sustainability and community drive Stoller Family Estate’s DTC current success, innovation propels it forward. Case in point: Stoller’s newest tasting room, the Stoller Family Estate Experience Center. Here, high-tech meets high-touch. “Our president, Gary Mortensen, is continuously preaching innovation,” said Kaufmann. “He saw this new tasting room facility as an opportunity to push the envelope and do something bold and engage customers at their pace.”

Stoller consulted with Tim Larsen of Downstream Media to leverage cutting-edge technology in the design. “We were building a second tasting room to accommodate our growing popularity long before the pandemic started,” confirmed Mortensen. “The question became, ‘How do we create something that feels like it’s part of our family but offers something unique?’” At the same time, they also didn’t want to recreate a space “that had the same experience in two different locations on our estate.”

Stoller Family Estate unveiled the Experience Center in August 2020. Vineyards flank three sides of the ADA-accessible, 8,000-square-foot facility. Adjacent, the estate’s historic turkey-muraled silo overlooks ample parking. Nearby, meandering walkways link the airplane hangar-sized building with the rest of the campus.



Inside, vaulted ceilings, custom lighting by Farmham and clean lines mimic the original tasting room. “We wanted to make this room look similar to our existing tasting room but then offer different things to it,” said Mortensen.

Low-slung furniture by Environments accent the expansive 4,000-square-foot tasting room. Clever floor-to-ceiling glass and metal 20-foot-wide by 12-foot-high garage doors open onto a spacious patio and grass amphitheater,

LAFITTE
& CAPSULE

CORK

*Crowning the Achievements of Fine Wine for Generations.*TM

for more information, visit: Lafitte-USA.com • 800-343-2675

Lafitte

Stoller Family Estate Brings the Winery “Experience” to a New Level

offering panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. Decorative patio planter boxes, fitted with rollers, double as discreet dividers for private events.

Experience Center technologies allow consumers unexpected avenues to the traditional wine tasting experience. “We designed these virtual applications to be both educational and experiential,” Kaufmann added. “This project’s scope has been the ambitious vision of Mortensen as it is the convergence of his 35-plus years in wine, technology and documentary filmmaking.”

Throughout the project, Stoller opted for in-house talent to develop virtual content, rather than outside consultants. “The vast majority of this content was created in-house, with good reason,” said Mortensen. “To properly tell the story of our farm and winery, it requires people who fully understand the DNA of our brand and history. This was an extremely intentional approach; and once we understood how we wanted to tell the story, we selected highly capable partners to develop each piece of technology.”

And what a story. First up, four sleek glass-top tasting tables fabricated by Diversified spring to life with the touch of a finger. Each table features high-resolution screens loaded with animated vineyard maps, grape varieties, soil types and a host of frequently asked questions. Questions range from the arcane (“What’s the age of the winery’s tire swing?”) to the geeky (fun facts on sustainability, winemaking and wine styles). “This is a way to let people ask questions and learn at their own pace, without feeling like they’re asking something silly,” noted Tracy Timmins, vice president of consumer sales.

At the center of the versatile tasting room, a 159-square-foot projection screen drops from the rafters for presentations then rolls back up to restore unobstructed views. Moveable walls slide to expand or reduce event space as needed. And extra USB ports in standing walls provide enough plug-ins for multiple presentations during meetings.

Above the eastern bar, a 136-square-foot, high-definition, jumbo-sized LED wall live-streams vineyard and harvest drone videos. The ultra-modern picture-in-picture and side-by-side toggle programming allows for simultaneous feeds during private, corporate and auction events. Undulating acoustical ceiling treatments echo the sculpted digital displays, in keeping with the room’s architectural rhythm.

Over the western bar, a 20-foot mural by local techno-artist JonMar, combines art and technology. With the point of an iPad or iPhone, the augmented reality app Varlio transforms static mural images into dynamic visual and verbal histories of the vineyard, family and Stoller Legacy Series Wines, narrated by Bill Stoller. “What we love most about the technology is that the content can be continuously refreshed to keep visitors engaged,” said Mortensen.

Engaging visitors enters a new dimension with the Experience Center’s Oculus virtual reality headsets created by ROAM. The reservations-only VR experience immerses viewers in a 12-minute, 250-million-year-old virtual journey across the vineyard. Headset wearers watch as Experience Center walls and ceiling slide away, and they land, Oz-like, into the vineyard outside. Soon the vineyard shifts to its tropical, prehistoric origins, where roaming vegetation-munching dinosaurs loom large. Just as suddenly, the scene shifts underwater—yet another phase in the Dundee Hills’ vineyard’s ancient history. Here, sea creatures float peacefully by until rudely interrupted by violent lava flows. The final chapter in Dundee Hills’ dynamic tale of terroir ends with a shift to the present-day Stoller Family Estate and a whirlwind walk through the lifecycle of a grape. The virtual experience wraps up with bottling, labeling and blending. “As cool as it is,” said Mortensen, “All this technology delivers a new take on telling the story of our vineyard and the people who created it.”

Ironically, despite the allure of cutting-edge cool, Stoller’s choice to use VR/AR required a leap of faith. “Historically, the wine industry hasn’t been on the leading edge of adopting new technology,” noted Kaufmann. “But we know that there is a high level of user adoption for certain interactive



STOLLER FAMILY ESTATE

The new Stoller winery is LEED Gold Certified.

technologies as consumers demand more immersive and memorable experiences across verticals. We pulled on this thread in two different ways: by literally immersing the Experience Center physically among our vines, and by creating an immersive experience in the building with virtual reality, augmented reality and interactive digital assets.”

Wine Country Elevated

Ultimately, Stoller’s diverse DTC program combines both innovation and tradition to achieve dramatic results. The Stoller Family Estate wine club illustrates this well. Currently, wine club memberships total more than 5,000 members. Yet despite the size of the club, Stoller maintains a small circle of friends and family feel. Every wine club member enjoys 20 percent discounts on all Stoller Family Estate wines, complimentary tastings for up to four people and invitations (pre-COVID-19) to members-only events. Members also receive first access to new release wines and exclusive bottlings, plus preferred pricing on elevated tasting experiences and guest house bookings.

These wine club members provide invaluable insights, too. By listening to their members, Stoller discovered a hunger for elevated Wine Country food and wine experiences. First, the winery added two reservation-only elevated wine tasting experiences. The History Tasting, offered daily, showcases small-lot, old-vine wines with deep dives into the histories of each wine and its vineyard. The Gastronomic Tasting proffers an artful array of seasonal fare served with five estate wines and requires 14-day advance reservations.

Next, the winery installed a commercial-grade kitchen and a dedicated culinary team in the new Experience Center. Here, Stoller Culinary Director Becca “Bex” Richards and her crew cook up everything, from sandwiches and charcuterie boards, to seven-course wine pairing dinners for 10 people. Logistically, wine pairing dinner reservations accommodate up to 12 people. Parties greater than 12 constitute a private event—another booking option.

Looking for a Better Packaging Experience?



Rely on Us

- A better customer experience before, during and after the sale
- Extensive inventory ensures product availability
- Industry expertise to guide you through the packaging process
- Quality products and customization to create or enhance your brand

WATERLOO CONTAINER
company
Supplier of Wine Bottles, Caps, Corks and Closures

888-539-3922 • waterloocontainer.com • Like us on Facebook! 

Stoller Family Estate Brings the Winery “Experience” to a New Level

Once the pandemic abates, exclusive private tastings will resume in the winery’s cozy Legacy Room, VIP Legacy Lounge and Skybox, and intimate Library Room. Still available during—and after—the pandemic, Stoller Family Estate’s three charming rental guest cottages for those looking to linger after last call, “We strive to create a comfortable, welcoming, inclusive environment, whether you are a first-time wine drinker, or a connoisseur of fine wines and wine education.” stated Timmins. All the cottages include high-end amenities, washers/dryers and complimentary Wi-Fi.

A stunning winery website provides 360-degree tours of each cottage and easy online booking. Lodging varies in size and location. The Estate House accommodates up to eight people, offering a patio area with views of the surrounding vineyards. For smaller parties, the Wine Country Cottage nestles near the winery and tasting room, and sleeps up to six people. And for large groups, the Wine Farm House fits up to 12 people and includes a gourmet kitchen with a veranda that overlooks the western pond.

For seamless integration between DTC platforms, Stoller operates two indispensable applications, both via iPad minis. TOCK tracks reservations and experience bookings while WineDirect manages POS processing, online shopping cart, Customer Relations Management (CRM) and wine club management.

Pandemic Pivots

Unfortunately, despite a successful DTC program, nothing prepared Stoller Family Estate for a global pandemic. “During the early days of the pandemic, we knew we were in uncharted territory, and had to make the best decision for our guests, our employees and our community,” admitted Timmins. “With all the unknowns around us at that time, we wanted to continue to provide our guests and staff something resembling normalcy, so we immediately began to offer a drive-thru curbside pickup.”

This decision allowed employees to continue working, while ensuring their health and safety. Curbside pickup also provided customers a welcome break from isolation, plus a soothing, scenic drive through wine country. The tasting room closed on March 16 and reopened on May 16, but Stoller still offers curbside service for interested customers.

Pandemic protocols also inspired the launch of Stoller Wine Group Channel in April 2020. The ever-changing line-up ensures a virtual connection with customers while entertaining them in the safety—and privacy—of their own homes. Light-hearted shows include finger-snapping pandemic winetasting protocols, favorite comfort food pairings with Stoller Culinary Director Becca Richards on “Cooking with Bex” and tail-wagging cameos by staff

wine dogs. However, as lockdown lingered, so did a thirst for live connection. To address this need, Stoller Family Estate initiated their first-ever dinner series in August 2020. The series offers a reservations-only, seasonal, wine-paired dining experience for parties of up to 10, while practicing safe social distancing requirements.

COVID protocols now touch every level of hospitality at Stoller. Guest lodging requires self-check-in/out, limited person-to-person contact and rigorous CDC standard sanitization. On a lighter note, each room comes with a coronavirus amenity pack at check-in, replete with Lysol wipes, hand sanitizer and face masks.

What about consumer response to these pandemic pivots? “Despite the pandemic, response has been brisk,” noted Mortensen. “We have been blown away with the response thus far. People understand that the large footprint of the Experience Center, coupled with our fanatical approach to COVID-19 safety, creates a location where they can escape and leave the world behind for a couple of hours. Technology aside, what people are really looking for is comfort and genuine hospitality. We’re thrilled that we can provide both for people, and the reception has been truly humbling.”

Healthy Dose of Disruption

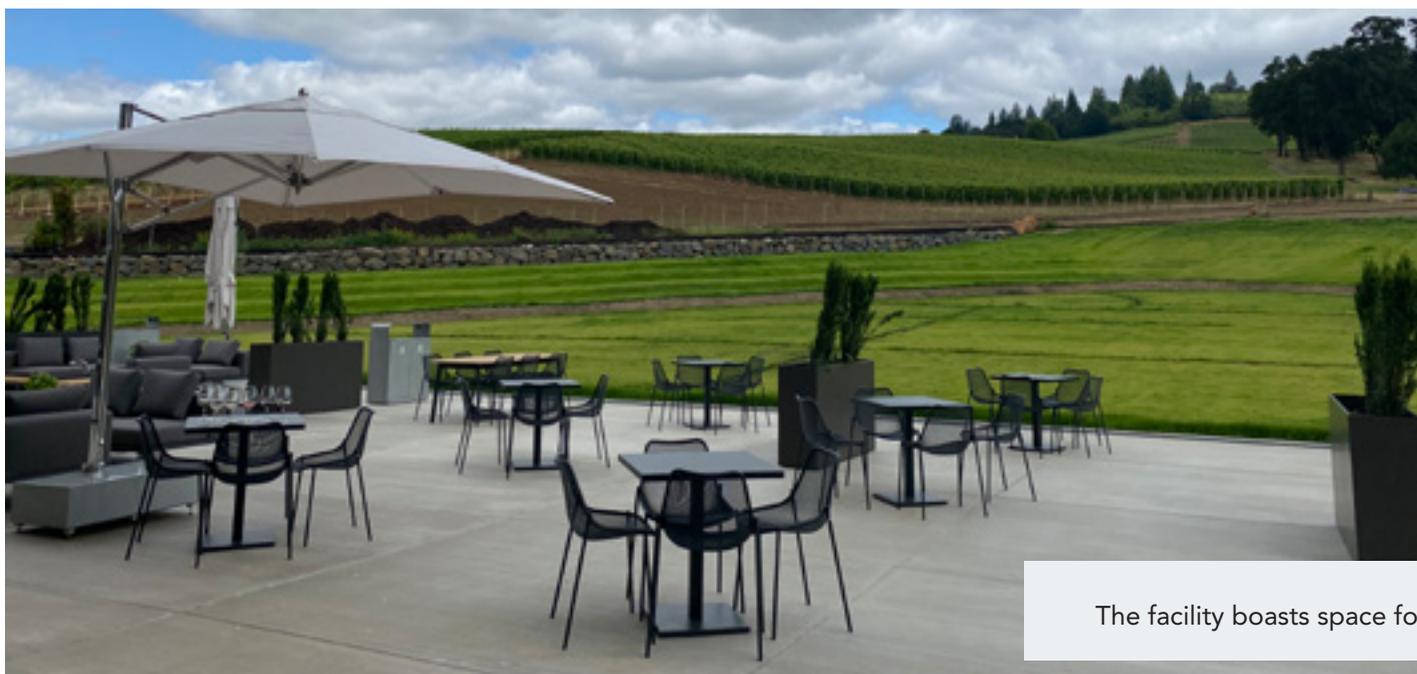
So, what does the future hold for Stoller’s DTC program, post-pandemic? Continuing to support community, for one. Last year, Stoller employees volunteered over 450 hours to local nonprofits. Stoller also supports the annual ¡Salud! Oregon Pinot Noir Auction, a nonprofit healthcare system that services Oregon’s seasonal vineyard workers and their families.

Planting a garden, for another. “We’ve talked about doing our own culinary garden for years,” stated Kaufmann. “Most of the fruits and vegetables that we serve here have been grown on our estate garden that we planted at the beginning of COVID.” Stoller Family Estate used DTC staff to plant the garden as a way of maintaining productivity and relieving stress.

Ultimately, community, sustainability and innovation prove the bedrock of Stoller Family Estate’s future and its DTC program. Recently, Bill Stoller purchased the majority of the Evergreen campus and the Wings & Waves Waterpark in McMinnville without fanfare. “He did it because it’s a crown jewel in our community that’s been underserved. We’re doing some renovations and restorations down at the Aviation and Space Museum buildings,” noted Mortensen.

“It’s all so exciting,” concluded Kaufmann. “We are living in an extremely dynamic time in the world. It’s critical to adapt to any challenge or opportunity. Our owner/founder, Bill Stoller, is an entrepreneur, and our president, Gary Mortensen, is a technology start-up veteran. Those two have set the tone for a company that balances sound business practices with a healthy

dose of disruption. But, despite this cool new tech, it really comes down to how well you can tell your story and how well you treat your customers. These principles will always be our primary focus. The rest is just finding ways to do it more efficiently.” **WBM**



The facility boasts space for tented and outdoor dining.

L.M. ARCHER

Technical Spotlight: Stoller Family Estate



16161 NE McDougall Rd. Dayton, OR 97114 | stollerfamilyestate.com | 503.864.3404

Owners/Principals
Bill Stoller

Owner/Founder
Gary Mortensen, President

Winemaker(s)
Melissa Burr, Vice President of Winemaking
Ben Howe, Director of Winemaking Operations
Kate Payne-Brown, Winemaker

Vineyard Manager
Jason Tosch,
Vice President of Vineyard Operations

DTC Manager
Tracy Timmins, Vice President of
Consumer Sales

Business Development
James Falvey, Vice President of
Business Development

WINERY INFORMATION

Year Bonded 2001
Winery Case Production 60,000
Average Bottle Price \$40
Direct-to-Consumer Sales (%) 40%

HOSPITALITY SPACE

Year Built 2020
Size (square feet) 8,000

STRUCTURAL

Architect Mildren Design Group | mdgpc.com
Contractor Perlo Construction | perlo.biz
Interior design Downstream | downstream.com
Interior design Mildren Design Group | perlo.biz
Landscape architect Stoller Family Estate—Corinne Gosnell
Flooring Perlo Construction | perlo.biz
HVAC HVAC Inc. | hvacincorp.com
Cellar humidity control N/A

TASTING ROOM

Furniture Diversified—Tech related furniture pieces | diversifiedus.com
Furniture Environments | environmentsnw.com
Lighting Solutions Farnham | farnhamelectric.com
Stemware Washers Bargreen Ellingson | bargreen.com/bg/category/index?name=equipment
Wine Glasses GlassTech | glasstechweb.com

SOFTWARE

Accounting software Sage | sage.com/en-us
Business Intelligence VIP | public.vtinfo.com/for-suppliers-wine-and-spirits-sales-reporting-and-analytics-tools
Club Management WineDirect | winedirect.com
CMS & Website WineDirect and WordPress
Compliance Samantha Plante Consulting
CRM—Direct to Consumer WineDirect | winedirect.com
DTC Software Suite WineDirect | winedirect.com
Shopping Cart WineDirect | winedirect.com
Tasting Room POS WineDirect | winedirect.com
Tasting Room Reservations Tock | exploretock.com
Immersive Displays (digital tasting tables, jumbotron, AV projector) Downstream Media | downstream.com
Augmented Reality Mural Jonmar | varlio.com
Virtual Reality ROAM | roam-vr.com
Website Design Hodgepodge from: Graybox, Tarfoot, Bluefire, and The Tresemer Group
Wine Production Software Vintrace | winery-software.com/tus

