



Winemakers

Urban Wine Making: Rock Wall Wine, Or How To Share That Bottle Opportunity

By Jenn Garbee Thu., Aug. 4 2011 at 2:00 PM

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Back in the early days of pre-Prohibition winemaking, setting up a winery adjacent to a vineyard was hardly a winemaking prerequisite. A warehouse or garage worked just fine for turning those purchased grapes into wine, particularly in California. According to UC Davis wine historian James Lapsley in this [Wall Street Journal](#) article by Ben Worthen, "most of the wine sold in the U.S. before Prohibition in the 1920s was aged and blended in warehouses around San Francisco."

But over the past forty years, being vineyard (and cash) blessed turned winemaking, or at least owning a winery, into an exclusive high rent district socio-economic club. While we're seeing our share of urban winemakers in Southern California, [Dave Potter of Municipal Winemakers](#) among them, that San Francisco-area historic connection arguably still has the strongest urban wine pull. The [East Bay Vintner's Alliance](#), founded in 2005, currently has 23 urban winemaking members in the area.

The leader, if there is such a thing, of the East Bay urban winemaking revival has long been Kent Rosenblum, who in 1978 opened Rosenblum Cellars in Alameda. Now he's passing the urban bottle on to his daughter, Shauna.

Along with her father, the 20-something winemaker opened [Rock Wall Wine Company](#), also Alameda-based, in 2008 (Shauna serves as Rock Wall's winemaker, her father is consulting winemaker). The wines are solid and come with a hefty dose of that big, jammy signature Rosenblum style, but what's most compelling here is the share-and-share alike winemaking mentality.

The Rosenblums operate Rock Wall Wine out of a 40,000 square foot airport hanger on a former Naval Air Base -- more than enough room for a small winery. And so they rent out the space, and share equipment, with a half dozen other small wineries, including [Blacksmith Cellars](#), [Carica Wines](#), [Ehrenberg Cellars](#), [R&B Cellars](#), [John Robert Eppler Wines](#), and [Virgo Cellars](#). There's a [new tasting room](#), too.

It's a smart business plan to share the rent, no doubt. But it also means that small wineries without the investment heft that the Rosenblums bring to the financial table can focus on wine production without shelling out the big bucks for their own facility.

In other words, a pretty fantastic grape-friendly way to encourage urban sprawl. Yeah, we're hoping the L.A. Department of City Planning is reading this, too.

Tags:

[Blacksmith Cellars](#), [Carica Wines](#), [East Bay Vintner's Alliance](#), [Ehrenberg Cellars](#), [Jenn Garbee](#), [John Robert Eppler Wines](#), [LA Department of City Planning](#), [Municipal Winemakers](#), [R&B Cellars](#), [Rock Wall Wine](#), [Rosenblum Cellars](#), [Shauna Rosenblum](#), [Urban Winemaking](#), [Virgo Cellars](#)
