

Maryhill tasting room ripe for waterfront grand opening

5,000-square-foot tasting room plans to pop cork in April



Emily Balland, friend of the Maryhill Winery owners, left, chats with Maryhill Winery retail operations manager Ron Vansaghi as light illuminates the interior of the winery's new tasting room at The Waterfront Vancouver. Vansaghi will also serve as manager for the Vancouver tasting room.



Interior construction has begun at the site of the Maryhill Winery tasting room at The Waterfront Vancouver. The outdoor seating area overlooks the Columbia River and will be divided into two sections with connections to the main tasting room and the VIP section. Amanda Cowan/The Columbian



Maryhill Winery owners Craig, left, and Vicki Leuthold look over the interior of their new tasting room location at The Waterfront Vancouver.



John Hanson of Mountain States Construction Co., orange vest, works with Ed Cushing of Northwest Electrical Contracting, Inc., inside the new Maryhill Winery tasting room. Amanda Cowan/The Columbian

By Anthony Macuk, Columbian business reporter
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It's been in the planning stages for nearly eight months, but now the Maryhill Winery tasting room at The Waterfront Vancouver has an opening date. The grand opening event will be held on the weekend of April 13-14, and will feature a lineup of live music each night and one complimentary tasting per person, with selections drawn from Maryhill's portfolio of 63 wines. There's still a lot of work that will be needed to get things ready, however. Standing at the center of a flurry of construction activity inside their waterfront space in late January, Maryhill Winery owners Vicki and Craig Leuthold and retail operations manager Ron Vansaghi outlined their plans for what's coming in a couple of months.

"It's surprising how fast it goes from here," said Vansaghi, who will also serve as the on-site manager for the tasting room.

Tasting room interior

The general layout of the site will match that of the winery's other tasting rooms in Spokane and Goldendale. And the 5,000-square-foot space in Vancouver will be able to host up to 300 people. A large vintage bar counter will be installed along one of the main walls, and a stage on the opposite wall will be used for musical performances.

A small checkout stand will be located near the front doors for guests who are tempted by the wines on the display in the central space, and a service counter hides the view of a room off to the side that will become a full service kitchen.

“It’ll have a rather extensive light-bites kind of menu,” Vicki Leuthold said.

Moving toward the tasting room’s south side, visitors will find a seating area with large windows overlooking the Columbia River and waterfront park. The entire south wall will be a series of telescoping doors, allowing it to be retracted to combine the indoor seating area with additional seating on an outdoor patio.

The eastern wall will be decorated with photos of various vineyards that grow the grapes that go into Maryhill’s wines, accompanied by details about each vineyard such as the history and soil information, which Vicki Leuthold says is intended to turn the space into a destination for wine aficionados.

“This will be the tasting room to come to for learning about Washington wines,” she said.

One corner of the interior is partially walled off and will serve as the tasting room’s VIP area, complete with two bar counters, interior seating and access to a separate section of outdoor patio seating.

The ceiling will retain an industrial look with exposed pipes and metal, but it will be upgraded with acoustic dampeners. Vansaghi said he has a large-scale music program lined up, with live performances scheduled every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. Weeknight performances could be added in the future.

“We’ll evaluate that as we move forward,” he said.

The tasting room is expected to employ full- and part-time staff, with about 15 total employees.

Bringing Maryhill to Vancouver

The waterfront site will be Maryhill’s third tasting room following the flagship location at the winery and a satellite location in Craig Leuthold’s hometown of Spokane. Another satellite location is slated to open later in the year in Woodinville, north of Seattle, Craig Leuthold said. The Leutholds founded the Maryhill Winery in 1999 in the Columbia River Gorge near Goldendale, and opened their first tasting room there soon after. The winery produces 80,000 cases annually and partners with two dozen vineyards across the state, and the site sees more than 75,000 guests annually.

The owners began thinking about another satellite location almost immediately after the Spokane tasting room opened in 2017, Craig Leuthold said, and they looked for sites in the Portland area and Southwest Washington because they perceived a pent-up demand for a tasting room in the region.

“The highest concentration of our wine club members are in Vancouver and Portland,” Vansaghi said.

The waterfront quickly emerged as an ideal site that would match the feel of the other two tasting rooms and bring in lots of new guests.

“Our other two locations are on a river with a beautiful view and an antique bar, so we’ve got a common theme,” Vicki Leuthold said. “I think this one is going to be so much busier than anywhere else, traffic-wise.”

The Leutholds originally approached Gramor president Barry Cain about the possibility of a tasting room last June and the project was announced in August. It took several more months of planning before interior construction began in December.

“It was a shell of a building built, and the priority was to get Twigs done and open, and then start working on this space,” Craig Leuthold said.

The tasting room is located on the ground floor of the Gramor Development building on Block 12 of the waterfront development next to the Grant Street Pier. The Maryhill site is on the western side of the building. Twigs Bistro and Martini Bar opened on the eastern side last fall, and a brewpub called Barlow’s Public House is set to open in the building’s second floor later this year.

“We’re excited to be a part of the waterfront development,” Vansaghi said. “It’s just going to be amazing when it’s fully built out.”

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