

# Amavi Cellars, Pepper Bridge Winery tasting room ready for business

## Joint tasting room is the second wine business at Waterfront Vancouver

By Anthony Macuk, Columbian business reporter

Published: November 22, 2019, 6:00am



Heidi Griggs is the manager of the joint Pepper Bridge Winery and Amavi Cellars tasting room. The new tasting room seats 44, plus seasonal patio seating. (Nathan Howard/The Columbian)

The Waterfront Vancouver's wine business lineup will take another sip next week with the arrival of the development's second wine tasting room.

The joint Pepper Bridge Winery and Amavi Cellars tasting room will open its doors to the public on Monday. The new tasting room is at 677 W. Columbia Way, on the north side of the Rediviva Building, and is open from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and noon to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday.



Both wineries are based in Walla Walla, and they're owned by the same trio of families — the McKibbens, Goffs and Pellets. In addition to a tasting room at each of the winery locations, the two wineries opened a joint tasting room in Woodinville in 2010, making the Waterfront location their second collaboration.

“We have over 500 club members in the (Portland) area already, between the two wineries,” said Waterfront tasting room manager Heidi Griggs. “That’s definitely what drew us.”

The seating area at the Waterfront tasting room is a modest 1,400 square feet, but the space feels cozy and inviting thanks to a floor plan Griggs describes as a lounge-style approach. A series of two-person nooks line the wall next to the windows, and at the back of the room a group of armchairs are clustered with small side tables. There are also two counter seating areas at the front and back of the store.

The indoor space can seat 44 people, and Griggs said the tasting room will add outdoor seating in the summer, which will roughly double its capacity.



The bar and main table were custom built in Walla Walla and shipped to Vancouver, and Griggs said the goal of the furniture and overall design is to try to replicate the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that customers experience at the wineries in southeastern Washington.

At the same time, the design is a bit of a new concept for Pepper Bridge and Amavi Cellars, Griggs said. The other tasting rooms feature large bar counters, but the Waterfront location has only a “tasting bar” table near the front entrance, encouraging customers to quickly grab a first glass and get settled.

“This is the first more relaxed, tableside tasting service for the company,” she said.



All the locations feature tableside service, Griggs said, but it will be more of a central focus in the Waterfront tasting room. If the concept is well received, she said, it's something the wineries may try to incorporate at the other locations.

The tasting room will offer a full selection of wines from both wineries either by the glass or as part of a four-wine flight with two from each source. There's also a small sales area and a cooler with prepackaged charcuterie.



The companies expect to use the new location as a site for future release parties, providing a nearby option for their local wine club members.

Pepper Bridge Winery, founded in 1998, focuses on making Bordeaux-style wines with mature grapes, Griggs said, and uses new French oak barrels for wines that emphasize “complexity, structure and balance.” Amavi Cellars, founded in 2001, uses more neutral oak barrels and younger vines, for wines that are “ready to drink upon release but are aging gracefully.” All of the grapes used by Pepper Bridge and Amavi Cellars are grown on estates owned or managed by the wineries, and Griggs said the companies share an emphasis on stewardship of the land and sustainable winemaking.

The Waterfront’s first wine tasting room is the Maryhill Winery tasting room, which opened in April in the Don Building next to Grant Street Pier. Two more wine venues are in the works: An Airfield Estates tasting room in the RiverWest Building and a Naked Winery wine bar in the future Kirkland Tower building.

When asked about competition from the other wineries, Griggs said she’s not concerned at all — in fact, she said the McKibben, Goff and Pellet families have been encouraging their fellow Walla Walla winemakers to consider the Waterfront in their own expansion plans. The wineries form a close-knit community in Walla Walla with strong mutual support, she said, and a similar dynamic has emerged in Woodinville, where Pepper Bridge, Amavi Cellars, Airfield Estates, Maryhill and several other wineries have all opened satellite tasting rooms, turning the city into a regional wine destination.

“The goal would be to bring that down here,” she said.



## Anthony Macuk

Columbian business reporter

[@anthonymacuk](#)

[\(360\) 735-4547](tel:(360)735-4547)

[anthony.macuk@columbian.com](mailto:anthony.macuk@columbian.com)