

Wine on the Vancouver waterfront a wonderful way to unwind

But to snag a nice spot, reservations are recommended

By Rachel Pinsky, for The Columbian

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Seattle residents Becca Roundhill and Dominic Thibodeau enjoy red wine on an overcast April evening at Brian Carter Cellars at The Waterfront Vancouver. Getting a spot with a river view takes some planning. (Joshua Hart/The Columbian)

On sunny days, crowds of people head to Vancouver's waterfront to find a spot to sit and sip wine. The most popular tasting rooms are the ones facing the Columbia River — Maryhill Winery, Airfield Estates and Brian Carter Cellars.

Here are some tips for snagging a prime river-view spot for sunlit sipping.

[Maryhill Winery](#)

801 Waterfront Way, Suite 105; 360-450-6211

Maryhill nabbed the first, best and biggest tasting-room location. It's also the only place right on the water. The space is large, with more indoor and outdoor seating than the other tasting rooms. There's also a food menu with wine-friendly bites like a charcuterie board, steamed mussels, and a hummus plate with veggies, olives and bread.

More food options are in the works. A pizza oven was recently installed, and a rotating selection of flatbreads will soon be added to the menu. Maryhill's own sandwiches and desserts by Ridgefield-based Killa Bites will also be available. A paired appetizer and wine-tasting flight combination arrives in June. The plan is to offer three savory appetizers and one sweet one to pair with a flight of seven wines. Possible dishes include a smoked salmon tartlet or caramelized pineapple with a basil syrup.

Maryhill has more tables than any of the other tasting rooms. It's also one of the more popular spots, and there's no reservation system. Maryhill tried taking reservations, but where people wanted to sit and whether they showed up depended on the weather. On a sunny day, everyone wanted an outdoor seat. When it rained, everyone wanted to be inside. And about a third who made reservations never showed.

Joining one of Maryhill's wine clubs increases your chances of getting a seat. Wine club members have a dedicated area, and they get priority on the waitlist. To join the wine club, members pay a one-time fee (\$25-\$50) and promise to buy a certain amount of wine a year (six bottles three times a year or one case three times a year). Membership can be shared by two people; this includes couples as well as two friends.

Maryhill's tasting-room manager, Emily Balland, said the longest wait so far for members has been 15 to 20 minutes. For nonmembers, the wait can be more than an hour on busy days. Wednesday and Thursday are slow; Balland hasn't noticed anyone waiting for a spot on those days.

[Airfield Estates](#)

760 Waterfront Way; 360-216-1106

Airfield Estates is a short walk from Maryhill along Waterfront Way. This tasting room has indoor and outdoor seating. The river view is obstructed in half of the outdoor seating by the building that houses Wildfin and soon-to-open Dosalas.

Airfield takes reservations, which can be made on the tasting room's website for a one-hour seating. If the place isn't busy, a party can stay over the one-hour limit. Airfield accepts only two reservations per hour to make sure there are tables for walk-in customers.

Owner Lori Stevens said that if you arrive between 1 and 4 p.m. any day of the week, it's likely you'll get a seat. According to Shannen Day, Airfield's regional tasting room manager, showing up earlier in the day makes it more likely you'll get a spot. When making a reservation, you can add your preference for indoor or outdoor seating in the note section. At Airfield, charcuterie boards are available for noshing while sipping a wine flight or glass of wine or sharing a bottle. The tasting room has a slushie machine churning out frozen rosé with lemon juice and raspberries. A new vintage of Airfield's champagne-style sparkling wine, Airfield's Blanc de Blancs, and a new vintage of Viognier will be released for spring and summer.

Dogs can sit in the outdoor area, but they must be well-behaved and on a leash.

[Brian Carter Cellars](#)

660 Waterfront Way; 360-216-1444

Continue down Waterfront Way to find Brian Carter Cellars. This tasting room has a nice corner spot with loads of outdoor space and river views. According to tasting room manager Rick Montgomery, the longest wait for a spot has been 10 minutes. If business picks up and he notices longer waits, he plans on adding a reservation system. To ensure a space, Montgomery recommends calling the tasting room before heading out to get an idea of the current wait time and advice about the best time to visit.

Brian Carter Cellars has a full food menu with crab cakes, flatbreads, salad and dessert. Hanger steak will soon be added. Suggested wine pairings are noted on the menu.

The tasting room plans to offer a bark-cuterie plate filled with treats for visitors' canine companions. Dogs are welcome on the outside patio.

A bottle of rosé or Viognier chilling in a bucket of ice, a plate of crab cakes and friendly conversation while glancing out at the Columbia River feels great after a year of struggle. Taking time to plan a trip to a waterfront tasting room makes it more likely you'll find the perfect spot to sip wine on the river on a sunny day.

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