

Sec. 26-18-260. - Winery definitions and standards.

A. Purpose. This [Section 26-18-260](#) provides a greater level of detail for the desired character of development in areas zoned LIA - Land Intensive Agriculture, LEA - Land Extensive Agriculture, and DA - Diverse Agriculture. For the areas zoned LIA, LEA, and DA, this [Section 26-18-260](#) identifies procedures and criteria applicable to new or modified use permit applications for winery visitor serving activities and winery events. The Standards in this division shall be referred to as "Winery Definitions and Standards."

B. Applicable Areas. The provisions of this section apply to parcels zoned LIA - Land Intensive Agriculture, LEA-Land Extensive Agriculture, and DA -Diverse Agriculture. For split-zoned parcels, the provisions of this section apply to the portion of the parcel zoned for any of the agricultural zoning districts listed above.

C. Local Advisory Guidelines. Citizen advisory councils/commissions established by the Board of Supervisors review projects subject to this section in accordance with their adopted local advisory guidelines, and make advisory recommendations to the Permit and Resource Management Department, Board of Zoning Adjustments, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors.

D. Terms and phrases used in this section are defined as follows:

1. Restaurant is a retail business selling ready-to-eat food for consumption on or off the premises, as defined by [Section 26-26-140](#) of the Zoning Code.
2. Winery means an agricultural processing facility that converts fruit into wine. Wineries may include crush areas, production rooms, case goods and barrel storage, tank rooms, warehouses, bottling lines, laboratories, administrative offices, tasting rooms, event space, commercial kitchen, and catering kitchen.
3. Winery Events means events held at wineries and tasting rooms for the purpose of promoting and marketing agricultural products grown or processed in the County, and which exceed the permanent infrastructure capacity of the site and are outside the regular business hours for tasting rooms. Winery events are secondary and incidental to agricultural production activities occurring onsite and/or in the area and are consistent with General Plan Policy AR-6d. There are two (2) types of winery events: Agricultural Promotional Events and Industry-Wide Events.
4. Agricultural Promotional Events beyond defined activities during standard daily operations that are directly related to public education, sales and promotion of agricultural products to consumers, including but not limited to: winemaker lunches, dinners, release parties, and wine club parties and similar events.
5. Industry-Wide Events are promotional activities sponsored by a recognized wine industry association that may involve multiple wineries and/or tasting rooms. Industry-wide events are held within a specified geographic area, during regular tasting room hours, and may last up to three (3) consecutive days.

6. Wine Trade Partners means distributors, wine trade buyers, restaurant owners and their representatives, winery or tasting room owner(s), winery employees, and tasting room employees.

7. Winery Visitor Serving Activities means visitor serving activities that are part of standard daily winery and wine tasting room operations. Standard daily operations do not include events or use of overflow parking. There are two (2) types of winery visitor-serving activities: Sales Activities and Wine Trade Activities.

8. Sales Activities are wine tasting, food and wine pairing, tours, seminars and other hospitality related activities that support the promotion of wine sales, excluding winery events. Sales Activities occur during the approved tasting room hours of operation specified in the use permit.

9. Wine Trade Activities are by-invitation meetings, seminars, employee harvest parties and similar activities, excluding events. Wine Trade Activities are attended only by wine trade partners and are not advertised to the consumer. Wine Trade Activities are intended to be low impact activities with a prohibition on outdoor amplified sound after 5:00 p.m.

E. Operating Standards.

1. Winery Visitor Serving Activities. Winery visitor serving activities are considered part of normal winery and tasting room business operations. All winery visitor serving activities must be consistent with the hours of operation, maximum number of guests allowed, building occupancy limits, and operational requirements specified in the use permit.

2. Winery Events. Winery events must be consistent with the hours of operation, maximum number of event days, maximum number of guests allowed, building occupancy limits, and operational requirements specified in the use permit.

3. Sizing of winery visitor serving activities and winery events, and maximum number of event days is based upon a variety of factors specific to the site and surrounding uses, including, but not limited to, septic capacity, available water supply, emergency access, availability of on-site parking, noise attenuation, increased risk of harm to people or property as a result of hazards, and the potential for negative cumulative effects related to noise, traffic, and water supplies.

4. Hours of Operation. The maximum hours of operation for winery visitor serving activities and winery events are specified below, unless further limited by the use permit.

a. Tasting Rooms. Regular business hours for tasting rooms are 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

b. Winery Visitor Serving Activities. The maximum hours of operation for winery visitor-serving activities are specified below by activity type.

(1) Sales Activities: 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

(2) Wine Trade Activities: 8:00 a.m.—10:00 p.m.

c. Winery Events. The maximum hours of operation for events are specified below by event type.

(1) Agricultural Promotional Events may occur during the hours of 10:00 a.m.—10:00 p.m., with all cleanup occurring no later than between 9:30 p.m.—10:00 p.m.

(2) Industry-wide Events may occur during the hours of 10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

5. Wineries and tasting rooms shall not be rented out to third parties for events.

6. On-Site Parking. The following on-site parking is required for wineries and tasting rooms:

a. One (1) parking space per two and one-half (2.5) guests and one (1) space per employee. The parking standard may be reduced in accordance with [Article 86](#), Parking Regulations, [Section 26-86-010\(i\)](#).

b. Use of on-site unimproved overflow parking areas or shuttling may be allowed to accommodate winery events, if specified in the use permit.

c. Overflow parking and shuttling shall not be used to accommodate parking for winery visitor serving activities.

d. No parking is permitted along any public or private roadways or on shared vineyard roads.

7. Food Service. Food service is allowed as specified below.

a. All food service must be designed to promote and enhance marketing of wine. Food service shall be secondary and incidental to agricultural production, wine sales and education.

b. Operating the food service area as a restaurant, café, delicatessen or any food service offering cooked-to-order food is prohibited.

c. Food and wine pairings featuring local foods and food products is allowed in conjunction with winery visitor serving activities and winery events.

d. Prepared meals featuring local foods and food products is allowed in conjunction with wine trade activities and winery events.

e. Retail sales of pre-packaged food in conjunction with wine tasting is allowed subject to the following limitations:

(1) Retail sale of pre-packaged food featuring local foods and food products is allowed during the regular business hours identified in the use permit.

(2) Retail sale of pre-packaged food is allowed for on-site consumption only. Outdoor seating areas may be allowed for use as outdoor picnic areas.

(3) Indoor seating area or table service in conjunction with retail sales of pre-packaged food is prohibited.

(4) Off-site signs advertising retail sales of pre-packaged food are prohibited.

8. Traffic Management. Traffic management and parking plans are required to address the maximum number of people visiting during winery visitor serving activities and winery events. For events exceeding one hundred (100) participants and for events that require use of overflow parking, the traffic management plan shall include the following:

- a. Provisions for event coordination to avoid local traffic delays.
- b. Parking attendants for each day of the event.
- c. A shuttle plan, if shuttling is requested, to support each day of the event. A convenient and secure "park and ride" area must be provided.
- d. A plan for on-site parking requirements and queuing of traffic.
- e. Enforcement of the on-street parking restrictions.
- f. Subsequent changes to the approved Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted in advance to the Permit and Resource Management Department.

9. Noise Attenuation Setbacks. Noise is attenuated by distance from the noise source. To ensure compliance with the Sonoma County General Plan Noise Element thresholds for maximum allowable exterior noise exposure levels, winery visitor serving activities and winery events shall meet the required setbacks provided in Table [18-2](#) below:

Table [18-2](#): Required Noise Attenuation Setbacks

Noise generating land use	Setback measured from the exterior property line of any adjacent noise sensitive land use
Parking lots	450 feet
Outdoor areas involving groups of people or non-amplified music (i.e. acoustic)	625 feet
Outdoor areas involving amplified music, or loud instruments such as brass instruments, horns, or drums	1,600 feet

Exceptions to the setbacks listed in Table [18-2](#) above may be allowed when a project-specific noise study prepared in accordance with the Permit and Resource Management Department Guidelines for the Preparation of Noise Analysis determines the project will comply with the Sonoma County General Plan Noise Element due to intervening structures or natural features, available open land on noise sensitive parcels, or by incorporating noise mitigation measures. ([Ord. No. 6404](#), § III(Exh. B), 3-14-2023)