

FOCUS ON THE WINE INDUSTRY



Rodger Nichols photo
James Martin refurbished the Sunshine Mill in The Dalles to use as a production facility for a French-designed bottling line for single servings of wine in plastic containers.

Wine by the glass revives old mill

Unique bottling line set up in Sunshine Mill allows for single-serving wine

By Janet Cook
 CRG Business Review

THE DALLES – James and Mollie Martin were traveling through France on the “bullet” train two years ago when they made a discovery that would change their lives: a single serving of wine bottled in a glass.

The Martins, both natives of The Dalles, are no strangers to wine. They’ve founded two well-respected boutique wineries: Silver Salmon Cellars in Astoria and Quenett Winery, whose tasting room is in downtown Hood River.

But wine bottled in a single serving glass they’d never seen. The ever-turning wheels in James’ head began to spin faster as he imagined single servings of wine being available at stadiums in the U.S. and other outdoor venues the same way beer has been for decades.

Back home in The Dalles, he delved

in to the logistics and realized that bottling wine in a glass wasn’t as easy as it seemed. It had been tried unsuccessfully by others before – including the Francis Ford Coppola Winery and Constellation Brands Inc., the world’s largest producer and marketer of wines.

“It all comes down to the seal on the rim of the glass,” James said. “It’s impossible to do. I started realizing that these guys in France must be on to some kind of technology.”

So he did what any self-respecting businessman would do: went directly to the competition. He contacted Pascal Carvin, owner of 1/4 Vin, bottler of the wine he’d seen on the train in France.

Carvin, it turned out, was inventor of



Submitted photo
Wine by the glass from OneGlassWine.

the patented OneGlassWine technology, and has been packaging wine in ready-to-drink glasses for the past decade using a bottling machine that allows the wine to stay protected from the ambient air during the conditioning and storage phases. Its patented seal optimizes shelf life and guarantees the restitution of the wine’s original characteristics upon opening.

James wasn’t the first person to contact Carvin about bringing his technology to the U.S. Carvin had rebuffed other bigger players because he wasn’t comfortable with them.

But James and Carvin had an almost instant rapport. They had several phone conversations and within three weeks, James flew to France to meet with him at his small winery and fig orchard

near Toulon. Carvin picked James up at the airport and they went straight to a rugby match – having discovered their mutual love for the sport.

“By 2 in the morning we were walking around, singing in the streets,” James recalled. “I think after that, it was just a matter of getting the contract done.”

The Martins and Carvin formed a partnership, OneGlassWine U.S., in early 2009. They spent the next months working on the design of a plastic “glass,” including creating a mold. (In France, Carvin bottles his single servings in actual glasses, but James knew he’d need to use plastic to be sold in stadiums and other venues.) They also began designing a higher-speed bottling line — one that “can service the industry rather than just ourselves,” according to James. And they sent “a lot of French product” through it during beta testing.

In September, Copa Di Vino (wine by the glass) was officially launched

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Sunshine Mill

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from its home at the Sunshine Mill at The Dalles' east end, with Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay available in stylish 6.3-ounce recyclable plastic "glasses." James wanted to get the product out in the marketplace before the bottling line arrived, so the first Copa wine was French.

In November, three engineers brought the bottling line from France and installed it at the former flour mill. The bottling line's diminutive 15-foot length belies its intricacies.

"It's one of the most state-of-the-art bottling lines probably in the

world," James said. "To have it in the Gorge is pretty neat." The line can bottle 2,000 units per hour. The uniquely shaped "glass" Copa Di Vino comes in is just one of several containers the bottling line can accommodate. The patented foil seal keeps the wine fresh for up to a year.

Now that the bottling line is up and running, James has begun bottling his own wine for Copa Di Vino. Copa was sold at the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day, and James hopes that's just the beginning.

"We should be in some of the largest stadiums in the country this year," he

said. Copa Di Vino is also available at Whole Foods, New Seasons, Mt. Hood Meadows, Rosauers (all around the Northwest) and select restaurants, including Pizzicato Pizza in Hood River. They're also on board with large-scale distributors around the country.

The Whole Foods scenario was an interesting one.

"Originally, they were not interested in another wine," said Molli Martin.

"They had never heard of it; didn't know what we were talking about. So Jim did a 90-second iPhone video and sent it to the head of Whole Foods. He said 'Stop. I want it here. I want exclusivity.'" Whole Foods didn't get the exclusivity, but they got the order. In fact, the Seattle district is on its fourth

reorder and the Portland district on its second.

"I think this is really just the beginning of the story," James said. "The problem with wine is that it's never ready to drink. Well, we're taking the quantity, reducing it to a quarter the size and making it ready to drink."

The Martins also see Copa Di Vino as a perfect way to raise the visibility of smaller regional wineries.

"We're looking to not only bottle our own product but to work with a lot of the small wineries," James said. "This is a way consumers can try out a wine without having to spend \$20-30 to buy

a bottle."

When he's not mired in the details of Copa Di Vino, James Martin has been working to refurbish parts of the Sunshine Mill building, which he recently bought from the city. It houses the entire Copa operation, including a tasting room that will open this spring.

Life for the Martins has been a bit busy since that serendipitous train trip in France. But they're enjoying the

ride, looking forward to seeing what this year brings as Copa Di Vino finds its way into the vast American marketplace.

"We're very gifted to have this opportunity, especially with the downturn in the economy," James said. "There's nothing else like it on the market."

For more about Copa Di Vino, go to copadivino.com online.

Lawmakers discuss wineries and parties bill

The question of whether Oregon land-use law allows wineries and farm-stands to hold non-farm events is coming to a head.

In recent weeks, the Oregon Farm Bureau and the Oregon Board of

Agriculture have developed resolutions detailing their stances. The Oregon Wine Growers Association has prepared a place-holder bill that Oregon lawmakers could take up in the February special session.



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