



## Mill Creek winemakers plan new construction

The addition to Abeja Winery's estate will improve efficiency with underground barrel storage.

Vicki Hillhouse 19 hrs ago



A concept design for the new Abeja Winery building on Mill Creek Road slated for completion in summer 2020.

Image courtesy of Jensen Fey Architecture & Planning, P.S., Redmond, Wash.

A new production facility for Abeja Winery will combine the pastoral tradition of the century-old barn where its portfolio of wines have been made with state-of-the-art features and efficiencies.

The Walla Walla winery announced plans for new construction on the west end of its 38-acre Mill Creek Road estate, including an underground barrel cave, between the merlot and chardonnay blocks.

Ketelsen Construction of Walla Walla is expected to begin building this summer with completion planned for summer 2020.

Husband-and-wife winemaking team Daniel Wampfler and Amy Alvarez-Wampfler produce the Washington state cabernet sauvignon, merlot and chardonnay for which Abeja is most known in the property's "Big Barn." An anchor of the property, the farm building is used to store a portion of the barrel-aged wine. Remaining barrels are stored at other on-site locations, the announcement explained.

The new winery will improve winemaking efficiency by allowing for central barrel storage. The underground design is also expected to boost energy efficiency, Abeja announced.

"The project is consistent with Abeja's commitment to quality grape growing, artisan winemaking and world-class hospitality, tenets that have defined the winery since its founding in 2000," head winemaker Daniel Wampfler said in the announcement.

The concept for the new design has been in the works since 2016, shortly after the winemaking team arrived at Abeja and began working with facility Manager Jacob Coburn.

Built in the early 1900s, the Big Barn was converted to a winery in 2004.

"We've had great success using the Big Barn as a production facility over the years, but making wine in a 100-year-old building has its challenges," Wampfler said. "The new winery will allow us streamline production in keeping with Abeja's ongoing commitment to quality."

Besides the underground barrel storage, the new building will include two barrel rooms with independent HVAC systems, plus fermentation tanks that can be heated and cooled individually for flexibility during harvest and throughout the year, the announcement said.

Office space, a wet chemistry lab, sensory lab and an open area to move the crush pad indoors are also part of the design.

The farmstead property was meticulously restored to carry out the vision of world-class winemaking and accommodations. Just a little more than a year ago, founders Ken and Ginger Harrison announced they'd sold the majority interest in the venture to two ownership groups.

The two continue to have significant equity ownership in the operations of the winery, according to last year's announcement.

Their partner in the winery includes Arnie Prentice of Seattle insurance brokerage and consulting firm USI Kibble & Prentice.

The Harrisons also continue to participate in ownership of the The Inn through a separate limited liability corporation, The Inn at Abeja Vineyards LLC. That partnership includes Prentice and John Oppenheimer, founder and CEO of Columbia Hospitality.

The property includes the winery and a mix of private guest cottages, rooms and suites, composing a wine country retreat that also hosts weddings and events for up to 250 people.