

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

vintages

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the HIP End of Town

TIN CITY HAS BECOME THE NEW HOT SPOT FOR TASTING IN PASO ROBLES. PAGE 13



JOE JOHNSTON jjohnston@thetribunenews.com

Paso's newest hip spot

BY SALLY BUFFALO
Special to The Tribune

It's an unexpected location, tucked behind a service road off Highway 101 at the southern edge of Paso Robles.

But this unassuming industrial park, still sprinkled with body shops, air-conditioning distributors and pool supply companies, is poised to become the area's hippest new tasting destination.

Tin City, as it was dubbed by the producers there, is already home to the popular BarrelHouse Brewing Co., more than a dozen small wine producers and a distillery making brandy, whiskey and other spirits.

SEE TIN CITY, 14VI

It's located in unassuming industrial park just off Highway 101 at southern edge of the city

BarrelHouse Brewing Co. and more than a dozen small wine producers and distillery are already open

And there are plans for a restaurant, weekly farmers market, possibly a bakery

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By summer, a cider house, BarrelHouse's new sour beer facility, a wine bar, a couple more wineries and a restaurant offering outdoor seating, mobile ordering and delivery to the small picnic spots around the complex will join the mix.

"It's just about to take off," said Nick Elliott, from Nicora Winery, which was among the first handful of wineries to move into Tin City about three years ago. "Once the restaurant is in, people won't have to leave. They can spend the whole day in Tin City."

There's more to come, too, with plans in the works for a weekly farmers market, and possibly a bakery or chocolate shop, according to developer Mike English, who is converting his business — an artificial rock manufacturing company — into a wine storage facility.

"When it's all done, we're going to have a unique little spot back here," English said.

The 20-acre parcel is about 95 percent developed, he said, with room for maybe a couple more buildings in addition to leased space that could open up.

Chris Taranto, communications director for the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance, said he doesn't expect the project to take away from the vineyard-set and downtown tasting rooms, but rather, add to the options available for visitors.

"Some people are always going to want the vineyard experience, and the downtown is its own experience, with the concentration of restaurants," he said. "This adds another neat tasting experience you can have in Paso."



PHOTOS BY JOE JOHNSTON | johnston@thetribune.com



Far left, a signpost at Tin City. Above, construction continues. Below left, is BarrelHouse Brewing Co.



A COMMUNITY OF WINE ARTISANS

Talk to any of the winemakers in the 20-acre park and they'll compare what's happening to popular destinations such as the Funk Zone in Santa Barbara or The Barlow in Sebastopol.

But with the exception of BarrelHouse, which draws crowds with its popular brews, live music and food trucks, Tin City has flown somewhat under the radar, visited mostly by aficionados who sought out the labels.

That's starting to change. Weekdays are still quiet. With small operations and a number of one-man shops, some of the tasting rooms are open only "by appointment or by chance." But visit Tin City on a weekend and you'll find people roaming the small quarter in search of open signs.

"We just walked from one place to the next. It was great," said Bryan

SEE TIN CITY, 16VI



FROM PAGE 15VI TIN CITY

Wallace, who recently drove up from Arroyo Grande with wife Kathy to hit some of the tasting rooms. "And you're not two or three steps removed — it's usually the winemaker behind the bar pouring the wines."

That's what makes Tin City special, visitors and producers alike say. It's a community of artisan winemakers producing small amounts of handcrafted wines.

It's also what's kept the spot pretty low-key so far — with small lots and eager wine club members, many of the wineries sell out within months of releasing new vintages.

"We have to skirt between wanting to be open and having something to pour," Jacob Toft said.

Like most of his Tin City neighbors, Toft spent years making his wine in larger wineries, shared facilities and anywhere else he could beg, borrow or

SEE TIN CITY, 18VI



PHOTOS BY JOE JOHNSTON johnston@thetribunenews.com

At far left is Aaron Jackson of Aaron Wines. Above is Brian Brown of ONX Wines. Near left, Close Solène and Aaron Wines are among the wineries in Tin City. Below is the ONX Wines tasting room.





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steal space and equipment.

He said he's thrilled to finally have his own tasting room, but enjoys being surrounded by like-minded winemakers,

many of whom have worked together in the past.

"Our friends are all around us," he said. "It's good synergy."

Tin City winemakers tell of tasting each others' blends, borrowing supplies and helping fix broken equipment — not to mention grabbing beers at Barrel-

House.

"It's sort of like borrowing sugar from the neighbor," said Brian Brown, winemaker at ONX, which has a spacious tasting room and production facility that opened in September.

SEE TIN CITY, 21VI

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Above is the fermentation room at ONX Wines in Tin City. Top right is Wine Shine, which produces artisan spirits. Bottom right is the tasting room at Aaron Wines.

Tin City taster's guide

Most tasting rooms are open by appointment or chance; regular hours are listed if available.

1. Aaron/Aequorea

Bold petite sirah from winemaker Aaron Jackson under the Aaron label, and single-vineyard pinot noirs and aromatic whites from coastal vineyards under the Aequorea label.

aaronwines.com
3050 Limestone Way
805-369-2037
Fri-Sun 11-5:30

2. BarrelHouse Brewing Co.

Handcrafted brews in a variety of styles including sour and wild ales. Don't miss the scenic beer garden, live music and weekend food trucks.

barrelhousebrewing.com
3055 Limestone Way
805-296-1128
Mon-Thurs 2-8, Fri-Sat 11-9, Sun 11-8
Sour beer facility under construction next door.

3. Brian Benson Cellars

Intense reds from a second-generation winemaker who made his first wine at 13 years old at his parents' winery, Dark Star Cellars. Look for Benson's artwork on the walls and labels, and the killer view out back.

brianbensoncellars.com
2915 Limestone Way
805-296-9463
Fri-Sun 11-5

4. Clos Solène

Elegant high-end blends made from premium grapes meticulously farmed by Guillaume Fabre, who comes from a winemaking family in France.

clossolene.com
3050 Limestone Way
805-369-2036

5. Desperada

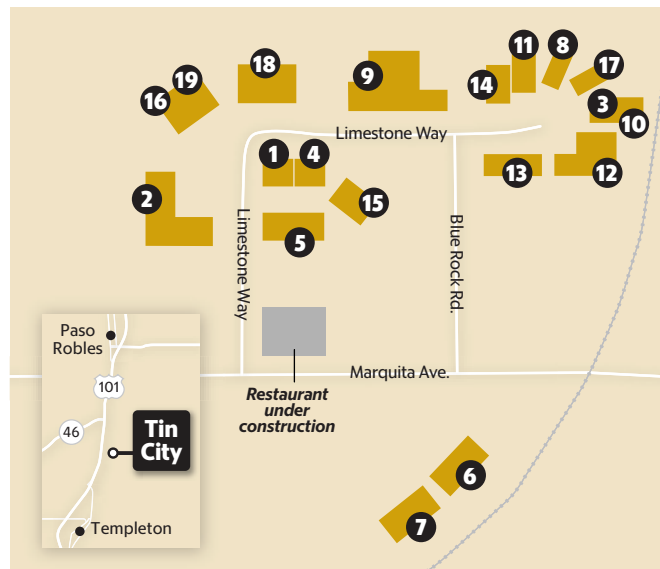
A range of wines showing artful detail inside the bottle and out. Winemaker Vailia Esh is a consummate explorer, continually experimenting with new vineyards, grapes and methods.

desparada.com
3060 Limestone Way
805-715-3910
Thurs-Sun 11-4

6. Field Recordings

A range of crowd-pleasers from Andrew Jones, named one of Wine Enthusiast's Top 40 under 40. Check out the popcorn machine and pingpong table, as well as his popular line of canned wine, Alloy Wine Works.

fieldrecordingswine.com
460 Marquita Ave.
805-503-9660
Daily 11-5



7. Giornata/Broadside

Italy meets California at Giornata, where Brian and Stephy Terrizzi grow and source premium Italian varietals. Broadside features value-priced cabernet sauvignon, merlot, chardonnay and a red blend.

giornatawines.com
broadsidewine.com
470 Marquita Ave.
805-434-3075

8. Jacob Toft

Premium Rhone blends named for and made with help from Toft's family members. That's his grandmother's 110-year-old Victorian house on the label and family treasures decorating the tasting lounge.

jacobtoft.com
2929 Limestone Way
805-550-8007

9. Levo

Rhone-heavy blends made with fruit from Ballard Canyon and other Santa Ynez spots, Los Alamos and Santa Maria by Brett Urness, who first made wine in his native state of Idaho.

levowine.com
2975 Limestone Way
208-631-1612
Fri-Sun 11-5 and by appt.

10. Nelle Winery

Rhone-inspired, New World blends and single varietals from vineyards across the Central Coast. Find winemaker Tyler Russell in the back of Brian Benson Cellars, where he'll throw a plank over a couple barrels and pour you a taste.

nellewinery.com
2915 Limestone Way
805-704-9859

11. Nicora

Rhone-style wines from some of the most renowned vineyards in Paso Robles, which you can see in beautiful photos adorning the walls.

nicorawine.com
2945 Limestone Way
805-400-0039

12. ONX

Unconventional blends from a still-expanding estate vineyard on the west edge of the Templeton Gap. Visit the spacious, modern tasting room or arrange to visit the vines on a tour of the scenic estate.

onxwines.com
2910 Limestone Way
805-434-5607

13. Powell Mountain Cellars

Rhone and Bordeaux blends barrel aged for up to three years, some of the grapes for which comes from Bill and Kim's 10-acre vineyard in San Miguel. Bring Fido — the outdoor picnic area is dog- and kid-friendly.

powellmountaincellars.com
3050 Blue Rock Road
805-434-8097
Fri 12-5, Sat 11-5, Sun 11-4 or appt.

14. Torrin

High-end, mostly Rhone, wines from the Templeton Gap vineyard owned by winemaker Scott Hawley, who also makes wine for the luxury label Law Estate Wines.

torrinwine.com
2945 Limestone Way
805-550-2058

15. Wine Shine

Flavored brandies made with juice from local wineries plus whisky, vermouth, bitters and anything else this upstart distillery can concoct. Try the addictive hook and ring game in addition to the spirits.

wineshineinc.com
3064 Limestone Way
805-286-4453
Fri-Sun 12-4 or appt.

COMING SOON

These four locations are under construction with openings planned for spring or summer.

16. Fableist

Value-priced cabernet sauvignon, merlot and sauvignon blanc from the winemakers behind Sans Liege and Field Recordings. Previously called Cane & Fable.

fableistwine.com
460 Marquita Ave.
805-503-9660

17. Lefondusac

Affordable vineyard-designate wines on tap with plans for music and food trucks in the outdoor area out back. A collaboration of Garagiste Festival co-founder Stewart McLennan and Stangar Vineyards' J.P. French.

2929 Limestone Way

18. Sans Liege

Critically acclaimed but affordable Rhone wines from Curt Schalchlin, who's developed a devoted following at his Pismo Beach tasting room. Make sure to note the dark, striking label art.

sansliege.com
805-773-2770

19. Tin City Cider Co.

Almost champagne-like dry cider available in cans and soon on tap at BarrelHouse and in growlers. A collaboration of the winemakers from Field Recordings, Sans Liege and Scar of the Sea.

tincitycider.com
460 Marquita Ave.
805-503-9660

FROM PAGE 18VI TIN CITY

The spirit of camaraderie is much stronger than any sense of competition, said Tyler Russell, who has set up in the back of Brian Benson Cellars to pour his two labels, Nelle and Cordant.

"I can only benefit from people around me making great wine," Russell said. "I want to be smack dab between two great producers. No one drinks one wine."

More traditional marketing including a website and advertising will come down the road, once more pieces are in place. But for now, the wineries are getting all the traffic they need from one another.

"People are always asking where to go next," said Bret Urness of Levo, which opened in October.

With such wide diversity in the development, it's easy to send people off to the right destination.

"You want Italian, go to Giornata. You want reisling, head to Aaron. For sought-out wine, there's Clos Solène — we got it all."

Down the road, expect organized block parties, roaming dinners and live music



JOE JOHNSTON jjohnston@thetribunenews.com

Back row from left, Stewart McLennan, Guillaume Fabre, Tyler Russell, Bret Urness, J.P. French, Bill Powell and Adrienne Lameray. Front row, from left, Brian, Christina and baby Benson, Nick Elliot, Jacob and Kelly Toft at the entrance to Tin City in Paso Robles.

in the cul-de-sac. But for now, while everyone's still putting on the finishing touches, the fun is more impromptu.

"We have people come in and say, 'Half our group is at BarrelHouse, these

guys are going wine tasting, we're here to drink brandy,'" said Patrick Brooks, a partner at Wine Shine, a distillery that opened a year ago. "It's a drinker's paradise."



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