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Quantum Leap Winery

Published on Thursday, 03 January 2013 11:27
 Written by Scott Joseph



Wine barrels surround a gathering table for serious tastings.

I have to admit when I heard the news that a winery would be opening near downtown Orlando I rolled my eyes. That's nothing new, of course, I roll my eyes a lot. In fact, if I could count on eye rolling as my sole weight loss activity, I'd reach my goal in no time.

My skepticism in this case had to do with the overall quality of Florida wines, which is, in a word, abysmal. It's not really Florida's fault; blame Pierce. Pierce's Disease, a condition that attacks

most of the common grape vines in the Southeast, prevents growers from producing much more than treacly sweet grape varietals. So the result is a wine whose only appropriate food pairing would be pancakes -- poured on top of.

But then I learned that Quantum Leap Winery, the new Orlando business, is not interested in producing Florida wines. Instead, it will have wine juice shipped to its facility where it will be finished, blended and packaged. Cue another eye roll.

But then I visited the winery.

Yes, it is a winery, and a very serious one at that. Just take a look at the equipment and you'll see that what is involved is much more than a gimmick.

Quantum Leap Winery is the project of Jill Ramsier, a former marketing executive with Ruth's Hospitality Group, and David Forrester, who owned a recycling company. The Quantum Leap model is to produce and transport wines to consumers in a more environmentally friendly way. Wines are shipped to the Orlando facility not in bottles or barrels but in large vessels, inside food-grade bladders, then transferred to large tanks or barrels for finishing.

Winemaker Paul Hoffman, who formerly led the wine education program at Robert Mondavi, consults on the appropriate blends for the resulting wines. In continuing with the conservationist theme, the wines are packaged in containers with lower carbon footprints than bottles, such as kegs, pouches and boxes.

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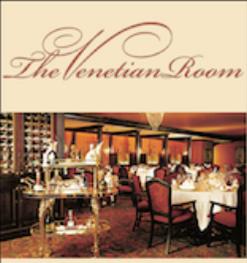


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Stainless steel tanks are part of the winery's production facility.

The key is establishing relationships with small producers from established wine producing regions around the world. When I visited, the winery was featuring Italian wines -- pinot grigio, a white wine blend called Garda, and Custoza -- from growers in the Venteto. And all were pretty impressive. I especially liked the pear notes in the fruity pinot grigio.

I also had a chance to taste Quantum Leap's merlot, from grapes grown in South Africa's Stellenbosch region. It was a

wonderful full-bodied wine.

The space itself is quite impressive. Occupying a former warehouse in the Mills 50 district just off of Virginia Drive, Quantum Leap's facility features a large tasting room for visitors to stop and try the wines. There is a bar and tall tables, colorful art on the walls and a floor of cork. Beyond the tasting room is a large gathering table surrounded by stacks of wine barrels. And beyond that is a room filled with more industrial equipment, the stainless steel tanks, the bottling and packaging equipment and such.



Quantum Leap Winery's tasting room features a large tasting bar and cork flooring.

You really should stop by and see it, and, if you like wine taste some. I think you'll be just as impressed as I was.

Quantum Leap Winery is at 1312 Wilfred Drive (west of Mills Avenue, south of Virginia Drive), Orlando. It's open Thursdays and Fridays from 2 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. It's also available for private events, and I'm thinking this would be an incredible party space. Here's a link to the [Quantum Leap Winery website](#). The phone number is 407-730-3082.

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 - Travel Reviews
- Restaurant Listings
- Extras
- Calendar of Events

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