

PHOENIX Business Journal

Friday, November 3, 2006

Vintage project: Membership winery slated for Tempe condos

The Business Journal of Phoenix - by [Lynn Ducey](#) The Business Journal

A residential developer is entering the wine business with **PurVine**, a private membership-based winery that will be housed on the ground floor of **Centerpoint Condominiums**, a group of multistory towers being built in downtown Tempe.

The winery is the latest entrée into the lifestyle concept of the developer, Avenue Communities and its principals Ken Losch and David Dewar. The pair joined with Napa Valley's Ray Signorello and his **Signorello Vineyards** to develop the Tempe winery. This year, the winery will develop cabernet wines using Signorello grapes, but plans to change its offerings each year.

While there are wineries and vineyards in southeastern Arizona towns such as Elgin and Willcox, those operations cultivate and harvest their grapes for a public offering of wine. In the Valley, **Kokopelli Winery** has a bistro in downtown Chandler and an operation in Willcox.

But at PurVine, participants purchase a \$500 membership to the winery. While single bottles will not be sold to the public at the retail level, membership is open and isn't limited to Centerpoint Condominium owners, officials said.

"This is the high-end executive version of a winemakers' club," said Rod Keeling, president of the **Arizona Wine Growers Association**. Keeling owns his own vineyard and winery, **Keeling Schaefer Vineyards** near Willcox, and has toured the PurVine operations.

"I've seen other clubs on a much smaller scale. I've never seen one set up quite like this. This is a full-



blown, high-end, state-of-the art winery," Keeling said.

PurVine members can purchase and develop a whole barrel of wine for \$9,000 or a portion of a barrel for varying prices. Participants can share ownership of a barrel, but must agree on the specifics of the wine they would like to cultivate. A barrel of wine is equal to 24 cases or 288 bottles.

For those doing the math, that breaks down to about \$32 per bottle of wine. Losch said similar-quality Napa wines cost between \$100-\$300 per bottle.

He said PurVine also offers social and educational opportunities to its members beyond the actual creation of wine.

"We'll have neighbors and friends sharing a barrel. It's for your own consumption. You can give it away for a great gift," he said.

"Our wine partners and their friends will be coming in for tastings, for educational seminars, they'll come in to bottle their wine, they will be involved in the pour-over, which is when the wine is being put into the barrels from the tanks."

The whole process -- from grapes to bottled wine -- takes anywhere from 18 to 24 months because the wine has to ferment in tanks, age in barrels and "rest" in bottles before it is ready to drink.

In addition, Losch said some proceeds from the PurVine venture will be donated to Avenue Communities' nonprofit, TRACares.

The registered 501(c)3 supports local children's-oriented groups such as ChildsPlay and also contributes to the support of a village in Zambia, Africa, said Margie D'Andrea, Avenue Communities' spokeswoman.

For now, the winery will operate in a temporary warehouse in Tempe until the first of four Centerpoint condominium towers opens downtown in the spring of 2008. Executives deliberately chose to pursue the winery concept now, they said.

"About four months ago, we made a decision to open this winery and we decided to do it early," Losch said. "We had to find a location, get the equipment. Everything had to be done in four months. And we did it," Losch said.

When residential construction is complete about 18 months from now, the winery will be located on

the ground floor in public retail space. Then, the winery and its 12 steel tanks -- each of which are 11-feet high -- will occupy a central part of the tower's ground floor, separated from the public area by floor-to-ceiling glass.

The ground floor also will include a gourmet cafe and grocery store as well as an Italian trattoria under the leadership of chef Michael DeMaria of Michael's at The Citadel, D'Andrea said.

Get connected

PurVine: **www.purvinewines.com**

Avenue Communities: **www.centerpointaz.com**

Signorello Vineyards: **www.signorellovineyards.com**

Arizona Wine Growers Association: **arizonawine.org**

Keeling Schaefer Vineyards: **www.keelingschafervineyards.com**

Kokopelli Winery: **www.kokopelliwinery.com**

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