

Toasting Oregon: Jackson Family Wines celebrates vineyards

Written by Michael Rose Statesman Journal
Jul. 31

statesmanjournal.com



Guests mingle during a meet and greet with representatives from Jackson Family Wines at the Chemeketa Northwest Viticulture Center in West Salem on Monday, July 29, 2013. The California-based company has purchased hundreds of acres of vineyards in the Willamette Valley.



Katie Jackson (center) of Jackson Family Wines talks with Mark Chandler of WineAmerica and Rep. Vicki Berger.

Guests mingle during a meet and greet with representatives from Jackson Family Wines at the Chemeketa Northwest Viticulture Center in West Salem on Monday, July 29, 2013. The California-based company has purchased hundreds of acres of vineyards in the Willamette Valley.
Purchase Image Zoom

Katie Jackson (center) of Jackson Family Wines talks with Mark Chandler of WineAmerica and Rep. Vicki Berger. / DANIELLE PETERSON / Statesman Journal

About the company

Jackson Family Wines has about 1,000 employees globally. The family-owned company's portfolio includes more than 30 wineries. In addition to California producers, the company has operations in France, Chile, Italy and Australia. Its divisions include Kendall-Jackson Wine Estates, Artisan & Estates and Jackson Wine Estates International. Its estate-based brands, include Cardinale, Lokoya, Carmel Road, Cambria, Matanzas Creek, La Crema, Stonestreet and Vérité. Source: Wine Business Monthly and the company.

A California wine giant has met its new Oregon neighbors.

Jackson Family Wines officials mingled with about 90 invited guests at a "Willamette Valley Welcome Party" Monday at the Northwest Viticulture Center in West Salem. The Sonoma County, Calif.-based company is best known for its Kendall-Jackson brand.

In the spring, Jackson Family Wines made its first foray into owning Oregon vineyards. The family-owned company purchased four vineyards in Polk County and one vineyard in Yamhill County, amassing a grand total of 1,350 acres.

"We're hoping to continue to build up the reputation of Oregon," said Katie Jackson, daughter of company founder Jess Jackson. The company wants to be "good neighbors and community partners," she said.

"Having the opportunity to come in and acquire the vineyards that we did was just too much in line with our philosophy, and too much of an opportunity, to pass up," said Christopher Jackson, son of the company founder.

Members of the Jackson family said their company has been welcomed by Oregon's much smaller-scale wine industry. Representatives of the state's wine business at Monday's get together said Jackson Family wines could boost the industry.

“The marketing muscle of someone like Jackson Family Wines could be very helpful,” said Betty O’Brien, co-owner of Elton Vineyards.

“They are expressing confidence in something that we have here — the special ability to grow super premium wine grapes,” said John Miller, owner of Mahonia Vineyards.

Wine Business Monthly ranks Jackson Family Wines as the ninth-largest wine producer in the country.

“I really do believe that Jackson Family Wines is going to raise the bar a bit in terms of our sophistication,” said Lowell Ford, a retired Chemeketa dean and one of the founders of Chemeketa Community College’s wine education programs.

The prominent wine producer also represents an opportunity to draw more wine tourism to Polk County.

“We’re pretty excited that we have someone in Polk County who is going to spend money and move the needle,” said Polk County Commissioner Craig Pope. “It will certainly create jobs and economic opportunity.”

In March, Jackson Family Wines purchased the Zena East and Zena Middle parcels in the Eola Hills. Those parcels are north of Zenith Vineyards near Zena Road NW. It also purchased the Maple Grove Vineyard southwest of Monmouth.

The company followed up in May by purchasing the Zena West vineyard in the Eola Hills and Gran Moraine vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton district.

Polk and Yamhill counties, as well as Chemeketa Community College’s Northwest Viticulture Center, helped organize the meet-and-greet event at the request of Jackson Family Wines.

The winemaker was the event’s sponsor and footed the bill.

In the past decade, the acreage devoted to wine grapes in Oregon has increased by more than 50 percent. As of two years ago, the most recent statistics available from the US Department of Agriculture, Oregon had 20,400 acres planted in wine grapes at 870 vineyards.

mrose@StatesmanJournal .com (503) 399-6657 or follow on Twitter @mrose_sj