

Case Study: Using Social Media to Leverage Your Wine Brand

How three wineries with different budgets have made social media integral to their business

Brianne Cohen

Meet the Author: **Brianne Cohen** is a Los Angeles-based event producer, certified sommelier, wine educator and wine writer. On the wine education side, she hosts in-person and virtual wine-tasting experiences for corporate groups. She does this by highlighting diverse-owned wineries (i.e., Black, BIPOC, LGBT and women-owned). Brianne regularly judges at international wine competitions, holds the WSET Diploma certificate and has a Master of Business Administration from Loyola Marymount University. She can be found online on Instagram and LinkedIn.

THE WINE INDUSTRY HAS A COMPLICATED relationship with social media, but a few wineries have identified social media as a necessity for smart and engaging end-consumer communications. While many are catching on and producing higher-quality content, it's not unusual to find some wineries have stagnant social media accounts with few posts—save for the requisite “harvest has begun” announcement and a static image of a vineyard or a cluster of grapes.

Dr. Laura Catena of Bodega Catena Zapata is one of the world's most recognizable winemakers and understands that having a strong social media presence (close to 1 million followers across all channels) has helped the Catena brand immensely. Part of their success, she shares, is that not only is the brand active on social platforms (@catenawines) but so are Catena herself (@lauracatenamd) and their winemaker (@alevigilmalbec).

Social media has become such a powerful tool because consumers across all age groups now rely on it to inform their purchasing decisions. Data from CGA by NIQⁱ reveal that 83% of Gen Z consumers have bought food or drink products after seeing them on social media. Similarly, CRM Essentialsⁱⁱ reports that 46% of Baby Boomers have made purchases directly influenced by social media content. Social media can bring in direct ROI through sales or appointment bookings, but indirect ROI is more common in the form of brand awareness and online engagement.

Luc Belaire, a French sparkling wine brand with more than 700,000 Instagram followers (@officialbelaire), has seen tremendous organic growth on social media. CEO Brett Berish credits exciting and inclusive content with partnerships from the entertainment world, such as rapper Rick Ross, for some of that success. He highlighted the importance of not alienating the next generation of wine consumers in your content mix. “I need to find a way to appeal to them just as much as the consumer that has been drinking our brands for two decades,” he said.

In this case study, see how three wineries use social media to leverage their brand and connect with existing and future customers.

The Small Winery: Cho Wines

Annual Production: 4,000 cases

Instagram | @getchowines | 17,900 followers

TikTok | getchowines | 12,400 followers

During the pandemic, husband and wife team Lois and Dave Cho launched Cho Wines out of Hillsboro, Ore. in the Willamette Valley. Lois reports that many of the visitors to the tasting room know nothing about the wines—but they have seen them on Instagram or TikTok. It's a reversal from the typical “visit, learn about the story, engage with newsletters/social media” customer journey.

“We moved to Oregon to pursue this wine dream of Dave's. We always knew there was some aspect of storytelling in winemaking. We'd always talk about what our story would be,” Lois shared. “As ‘the Instagram winery,’ our social media has been very central to our growth.”

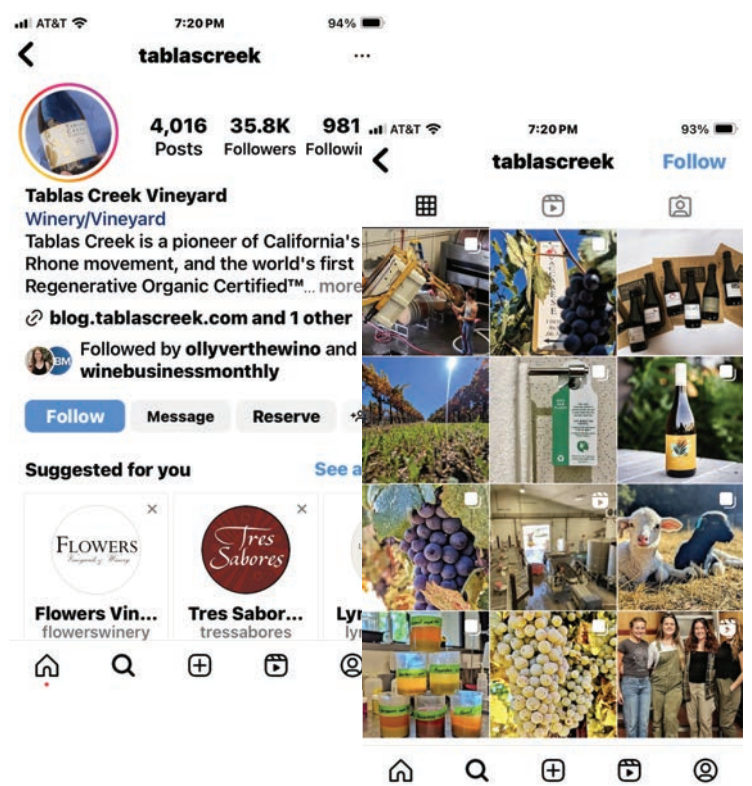
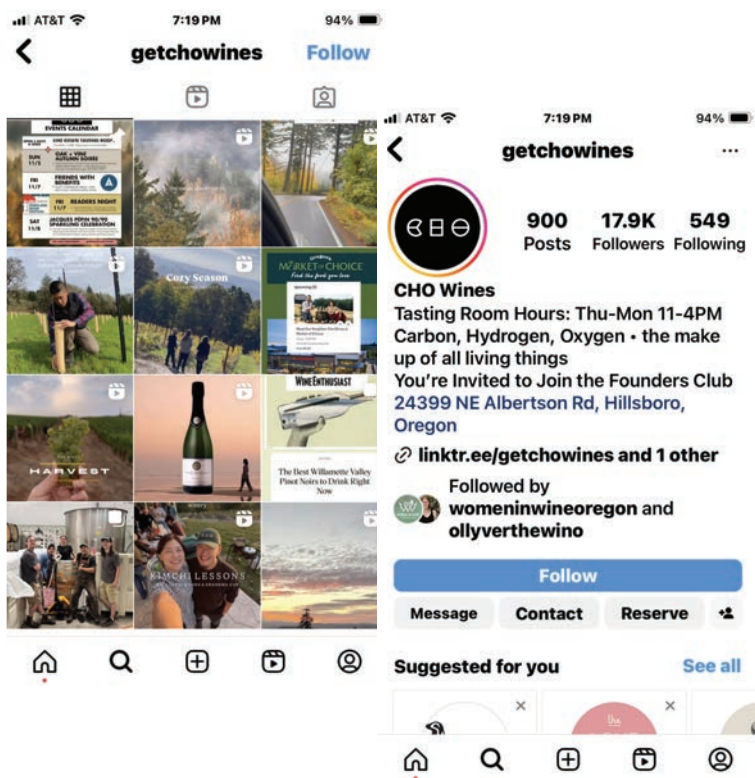
Cho leveraged her personal Instagram page to grow the Cho Wines' brand page. Every night, she would message 30 people with a copy and paste of their short story and invite them to follow the brand page. She targeted influencers, wine professionals and consumers who interacted with similar, small wine brands. After doing this for two months, the brand's Instagram page grew by 500 followers.

“We wanted to make sure that those who followed our business page were authentic engagement, that they were people who really interacted with our brand,” she said.

Cho Wines does not work with a content calendar and has no social media strategy; the goal is to grow the account and keep followers as engaged as possible. They do this by consistently sharing entertaining and fun content that is authentic and real versus content that features a “hard sell.” This mix of content elicits credibility and trust, especially as consumers grow weary of constantly being sold.

Cho can identify social media milestones where their account and corresponding reach significantly grew. In April 2021, it was Asian-American Pacific Islander Month and Oregon Wine Month, so she posted a family photo in their traditional Korean garbⁱⁱⁱ. The Urban Grape, a prominent Black-owned wine shop that regularly highlights diverse-owned wineries, shared that photo, and the Cho Wines' Instagram account grew by 500 followers in one day.

When their tasting room opened in May 2024, their neighbors posted a video^{iv}, which was shared more than 7,000 times and garnered them 3,000



new followers. “Shares are free marketing—that’s how your follower count grows,” she said.

Cho has tried boosting posts but has not seen any ROI. Sometimes straightforward content, such as screenshots of their upcoming calendar as a static “pinned” post, doesn’t garner much engagement. However, their wine club members and followers still find the content useful by helping them engage through ticket sales, attendance and word of mouth.

Cho was unsure about how to tackle TikTok. Like Instagram, she first created a personal account and committed to posting every day for 60 days to see where it went. On the 60th day (in May 2023), she had not seen much movement with the account but posted a carousel of Instagram images^v that shared their origin story. Cho added trending audio that tugged at the heartstrings. The post went “viral”—more than 1.6 million views that day. The next day, an NBC producer reached out then sent out a film crew, and Cho Wines was nationally broadcast on NBC Nightly News and the Today Show. Countless people, who never would have found them if it weren’t for this coverage, came through their doors and bought wine.

Cho shoots all brand content (imagery and video) on her phone and does not work with a camera or other equipment. As business owners, the couple take on multiple duties, but more recently, they hired their first two full-time employees to manage the wine club and tasting room, which opened on Memorial Day weekend of this year. In four days, they saw 800 covers, and almost 100% of those guests (who weren’t wine club members) learned about their brand from social media.

The Mid-Size Winery: Tablas Creek Vineyard

Annual Production: 30,000 cases

Instagram | @tablascreek | 35,800 followers

Facebook | 14,000 followers

TikTok | @tablascreek | 1,059 followers

“Social media is important. It’s how you bring people into your world,” shared Ian Consoli, marketing director at Tablas Creek Vineyard in Paso Robles. “It’s a personal look at what we go through daily and a way of exposing people to what goes on in a vineyard.”

Tablas Creek is most active on Instagram, Facebook and X and posts daily, seven days a week. The platform, Later, is used to schedule posts. Consoli shares that approximately 40% of his job is creating content.

Jason Haas, the owner of Tablas Creek, is still actively involved in the company’s social media content. Haas was one of the early adopters of social media in the wine industry. “Twitter came to him naturally, and he’s not camera-shy. He’s dialed into social media and gets it,” Consoli observed. This allows consumers and followers to have a “relationship,” not only with the brand but also with the founder, which helps solidify and strengthen the connection. Haas is the secret sauce.

Tablas Creek’s social media messaging is focused on storytelling—only one weekly post will feature a wine or a new release. They do not view social media as a sales channel and choose not to advertise or boost posts. They boosted a post once, and their organic engagement fell off, so they stopped.

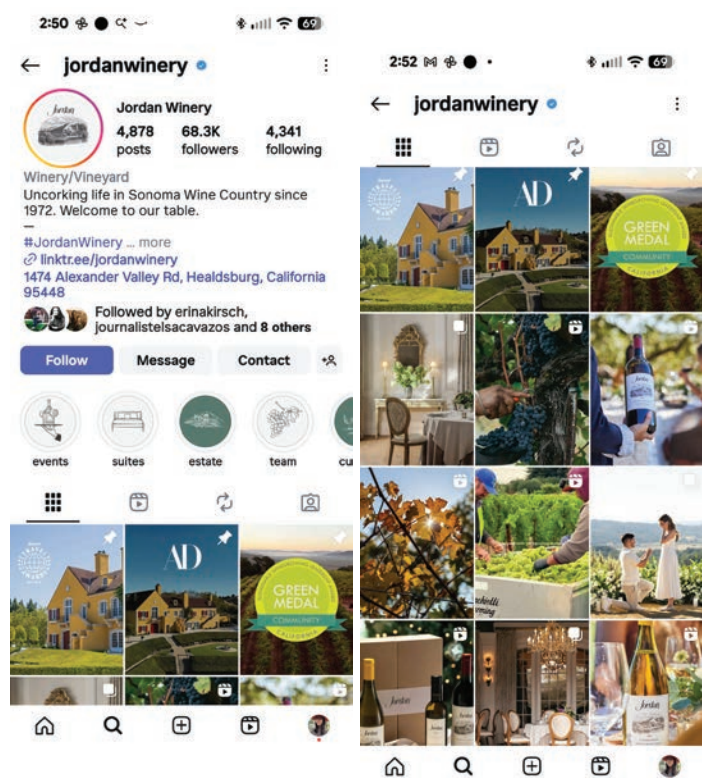
“Our philosophy is to focus on impressions and reach,” Consoli said. “We don’t draw a direct line to sales, but absolutely, social media is beneficial to our bottom line.” In 2023, their social media content had more than 8 million impressions and a reach of more than 4 million people.

Tablas Creek’s social growth has been slow and organic. Behind-the-scenes posts have done well, specifically with the 2022 release of their \$99 premium boxed wine. An Instagram reel,^{vi} showing the filling process of the bag-in-box, garnered a reach of 279,000 people with more than 2,500 reactions. A Facebook reel that highlighted the start of harvest^{vii} from the same year, featuring a trending sound plus quick video clips, reached 550,000 users with close to 3,000 reactions.

In addition, Tablas Creek has consistently tried to educate consumers on the types and styles of their 20 different Rhône grape varieties as they are the focus of the Tablas Creek portfolio. This subject comes up in tasting experiences in the tasting room, in newsletters and on the winery’s industry leading wine blog. Haas had an idea to bring that content to social media, which materialized in their “Grape Minute” series,^{viii} where Haas goes into the vineyard and shoots a quick video about a specific Rhône grape, utilizing quick facts and points from their blog. The video is edited down to 60 seconds, supplemented with B-roll (secondary footage) and posted on socials. The content hasn’t necessarily gone viral, though they’ve received lots of positive feedback as it’s seen as authentic to the Tablas Creek brand.

Tablas Creek’s social media costs come mainly from salaries and compensation for people, such as a marketing director and marketing intern(s).

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“We’re willing to invest in people to make sure that the content is valuable,” Consoli shared. No professional photography is used as Consoli and Haas shoot all content. Other costs include equipment available at places, like Amazon, including a drone, DSLR camera, gimbal, tripod, microphone and lighting.

The Mid-Large Winery: Jordan Winery

Annual Production: 100,000

Instagram | @jordanwinery | 68,200 followers

Facebook | 53,000 followers

Jordan Winery is a case study unto itself as they have built a 100,000-case wine brand, including a robust membership model and hospitality experiences, with only two wines produced annually. It goes without saying that the Jordan brand is much more than wine.

“We want to invoke emotion and the idea of aspiration and inspiration for our lifestyle brand,” said Kendall Busby, director of marketing and communications. “There are a lot of stories to tell about our estate and who we are.” This includes the sprawling 1,200-acre property (75% of the land has been left wild), culinary, hospitality and loyalty programs, and overnight suite accommodations.

Instagram is their most important platform, though they have different strategies for the others as well. Instagram content is focused on storytelling with beautiful imagery and video. For World Bee Day in May 2023, they posted a reel¹ that highlighted temporary art installations on their concrete eggs. In March 2025, Jordan collaborated with a different artist to highlight the butterflies and different pollinator plants on their estate.² Both posts performed well on Instagram.

All footage was shot on Busby’s iPhone, and no ad spend was made on either post. Busby described these content pieces as “Authentic and true to who Jordan is as a brand. The visual component, plus people’s desire to see a process from beginning to end,” likely contributed to follower interest.

Facebook has been a more successful platform for sales conversions, where they advertise and boost posts. Jordan’s new spring releases came out in May, and on Facebook, the offer was a mixed case of current release

wines with flat-rate and 50% off shipping. The creative featured an animated GIF of a case box being filled and the bottles changing, highlighting the customization possibilities. The ad ran for approximately three weeks, and over 100 purchases were attributed to the campaign. The ad garnered 400 landing page views, a reach of over 15,000 and over 40,000 impressions. With an average bottle price of \$53, a case average of \$636 indicates over \$60,000 in revenue generated.

Busby, the in-house content creator for Jordan, shoots approximately 80% of the social content on her phone. The balance comes from raw footage in the brand’s archive. About once a year, Jordan has a professional photo shoot (usually for their annual brand magazine) or a professional video shoot (this year, it was for their remodeling). Busby suggests that if you hire a photographer or a videographer for a brand shoot, request the raw footage and be sure to capture behind-the-scenes images and video of the shoot for use on socials.

“Most footage does not make it in the one-minute brand video they were hired to create for your homepage, but it’s good footage nonetheless and can be easily repurposed for socials,” she said.

Jordan had a substantial long-form video shoot back in 2017 that was created in horizontal DSLR, ideal for socials. The footage lives on a hard drive that Busby repeatedly pulls from for socials, even seven years later. She re-cuts the videos with current content and crops accordingly.

Like Tablas Creek, Jordan’s social spend is mainly on people. Aside from Busby’s role, they also have a digital marketing manager who manages their social ads and a consultant agency that edits and schedules posts, along with handling community engagement on all platforms. They also manage the planning of the content calendar, which is planned four to six weeks in advance. Other costs include a drone, DSLR camera, tripod, microphone and lighting. Regardless of your budget, Busby advised, “Be smart, efficient, scrappy with your content creation and the footage that is captured.”

Conclusion

With many options available, wineries can hand-select which strategies and content mix work best for them when creating social media content that resonates. Starting somewhere manageable is also critical: simply plan and create content, then work to engage with followers through meaningful exchanges. Catena noted that the Catena Wines’ brand spends a lot of time and effort to interact with every consumer.

According to Busby, the key is to “Think about ways to relate to your customers that are authentic to who you are.” She added, “Different and unique ways get the message across” to leverage social media for your wine brand.

The point, though, is that it does not need to be expensive, and it does not need to be a sales push. If you have fun with it and use it to tell a story, consumers and followers will have fun with it, too. **WBM**

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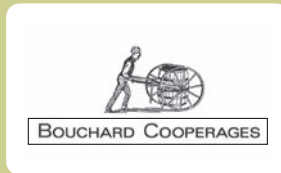
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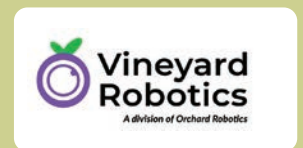
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