

STOLLER FAMILY ESTATES ENVISIONS FUTURE WINE EXPERIENCES



By Michael Perman, C'EST WHAT? LLC

It's 6:02 p.m. on a searing August evening in 2026 and you're on your final leg of the Paradise Park Trail on Mt. Hood, craving an icy cold Elsie's Chardonnay from Stoller Family Estate, imagining that vibrant palate with notes of citrus and honeycomb, and a creamy minerality on the finish. Check your backpack? Nope, not there! But your video sunglasses are picking up a signal and you are virtually transported to the harvest fields and cool wine cellar of Stoller Family Estates for a private tasting. At least you can be there in your mind for now.

In the coming years, we will likely see intersecting trends of alcohol-free mixology and boozy versions of popular healthy beverages. More exotic herbs and unique combinations of ingredients could become mainstream, fueling the already hot brand collaborations trend. More, wine brands will be upping their game in brand experience and direct-to-consumer (DTC) marketing in order to differentiate and expand audiences.

OPPORTUNITY FORECAST: BRAND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Brands that focus on experience design and engagement to support their authentic product story will thrive in the future. Stoller Family Estate is a prominent example.

The wines are legendary, but the brand's new 8,000-square-foot experience center in Dayton, Oregon, exemplifies the "content as king" approach to the brand. How many wineries have a full-time film production and content creation team cranking out augmented reality, virtual reality, and fantastic content that accentuates the wine-drinking experience? Not many, but the emphasis on dedicated content to entertain and educate customers on the subtle nuances of wines is especially au Courant.

Stoller's experience center features emerging technologies that connect guests directly with new forms of wine education using augmented reality art, interactive tasting tables, and high-quality curated videos projected to a stadium-size screen. Beverage companies wanting to expand their future audience need to up their content creation game in content creation while maintaining a focus on authenticity.





The depth of Stoller's brand engagement shines a light on the future of the wine business. "We are an experience design company who believes in disruption," said Mortensen.

Jenna LaCroix, Stoller's director of marketing, believes future "consumers will crave an authentic origin story" as they select brands. That requires brands to actually be authentic and transparent, which includes their sustainability behaviors. Stoller was the first winemaking facility in the world to receive LEED Gold certification. They are also LIVE certified (Low Input Viticulture and Enology), which acknowledges the company's emphasis on regenerative biodiversity. Plus, Stoller is a B corporation.

OPPORTUNITY FORECAST: NOVEL READY TO DRINK INNOVATION

COVID-19 spurred nearly 80 percent growth in ready-to-drink (RTD) cocktails in 2020, and the trend is continuing with vivid innovation in the consumer marketplace. Stoller Swing Rosé Spritz is on trend with lower alcohol offerings and blends proprietary vermouth with wine for a botanical hit.

Says Melissa Burr, Stoller's vice president of winemaking, "Rosé Spritz is synergistic crossover between rosé, vermouth and carbonation. It is refreshing and a little herbal. But it is not a typical wine spritzer. Consumer-wise, we're going to pull from other RTD categories — those hard seltzers as well, especially if we're getting cold cases sitting next to ciders and microbrews." [Stoller's Canned Oregon brand](#) is also in the zone with a spectrum of options and plans for the future.

Although the three-tier distribution system for wine often restricts business model innovation, cracks in the armor are leading to interesting workarounds. Companies such as Drizly, Saucy and Minibar that deliver directly got a boost recently when alcoholic beverages were considered "essential." These companies are three-tier e-commerce platforms that act like the liquor store version DoorDash.

By 2026, the wine business is likely to see more disruption in business models. Gary Mortensen, president of Stoller Family Estate Vineyard and Winery, says, "I think there is going to be profound opportunity for suppliers to have engagement directly to the consumers. If you can embrace what engagement achieves,

the opportunity to scale up becomes more open. I think that national sales and direct-to-consumer are starting to really hybridize.”

Thirsty now? Rather than waiting until 2026 to slurp or sip, you're invited to be part of creating what's next in the drinkables business, in any form or reality you desire. Now you can be a resource for the tremendous growth that's coming our way.

C'EST WHAT? LLC is an innovation strategy and new product development firm that forecasts emerging opportunities and aligns teams on the best path forward. Our holistic approach is based on the concept of regeneration for people, organizations and communities. C'EST WHAT expertise includes ethnographic insights, foresights, strategy and concept creation.

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