



# The Stomping Ground



Jason and Janu Goelz and Tim Slater



About a year ago Jason and Janu Goelz, Jason Stephens Winery and Tim Slater, Sarah's Vineyard launched The Stomping Ground, an interesting and ambitious project. Essentially the project has two components:

- Transform a former industrial facility into a state of the art winemaking studio with production, custom crush and storage facilities
- Host a number of premium wineries for wine tasting, entertainment and related agri-tourism activities.

Written By LARRY J. MICKARTZ

In the last year Jason and Janu Goelz have moved their production from Watsonville Road to the new location at the end of Renz Lane. Tim Slater also moved Sarah's production to the new facility. The wine production component of the project was the major focus of operations last year. One building of the former Boral roofing tile production facility has become a 12,800 square foot refrigerated case storage facility. The old main tile production building has become a 22,800 square foot wine production and barrel storage facility. The old buildings had to be cleaned of layer upon layer of dirt and clay, new insulation had to be installed, and everything readied for wine production. During the 2016 harvest The Stomping Ground processed grapes for ten wineries. With new equipment in place this year and with more space cleaned and available for processing the number will grow. This year Janu Goelz will launch her own label, Alara Cellars, an homage to fashion and wine.

One of the interesting current projects is cleaning the eleven former tile curing vaults for eventual barrel storage. The 42-foot-deep vaults can each house about 150 barrels. The thick walls and insulation make for picturesque and ideal wine storage. More processing tanks and processing equipment are being moved in and readied for the 2017 harvest. A wine lab is being built.

The production needs of the three partners is a good illustration of the flexibility of this operation. Jason Stephens needs significant production and storage space but it also needs a tasting room on site. Janu Goelz has been working on several wine certifications such as Certified Specialist of Wine and passed the intro sommelier exam. She will be releasing her first wine this season, a 2015 Pinot Noir. She will be opening a smaller tasting venue. Tim Slater, has moved his production and storage to the new facility but his tasting room will remain at the Sarah's facility on Hecker Pass.

The second component of The Stomping Ground is the tasting rooms and all things wine. Currently the partners are working with an architect to develop a conceptual plan for several tasting rooms, a restaurant, food trucks, a stage,

a wine themed boutique, and maybe even a brewery. The Stomping Ground's business plan envisions ten tasting rooms. They are even looking into the possibility of opening an organic produce market.

Currently only Jason Stephens has a tasting room on site. Once Janu gets all her permits and approvals she will open a smaller tasting facility. Several established and new local wineries have sought information on opening a tasting room. With seven acres the possibilities are endless. Behind the main production and tank storage building is a site perfect for a stage. Jason Stephens had a very successful Friday night music series at the old winery on Hecker Pass. However, traffic and noise issues severely limited growth. The new site has plenty of parking and music will not be an issue on the seven acre site. Watch for more plans and information in the coming months.

The newly remodeled and elegant Jason Stephens tasting room, one of the old Boral offices, is a combination of a family friendly patio, a tasting room and an adults only patio. Food trucks and entertainment are regulars at wine club events. The Jason Stephens tasting room is open daily for 11:00 to 6:00.

As The Stomping Ground project moves along on several fronts the partners, Jason, Janu and Tim, commented on the high level of cooperation and support they have received from City of Gilroy staff. Locally there is not a lot of history transforming a large industrial operation into a wine production and tasting facility.

Their experience with the City has been favorable and hopefully a predictor of future growth and success for The Stomping Ground.



Janu Goelz' own label "Alara" combining her love of wine and fashion.