

Tasting Room

Accommodating Neighbors' Concerns About Winery Events

Background: The Edna Valley Winery anticipated neighbors' objections to events such as concerts, weddings, and special tastings. "We wanted to listen to our neighbors and also make sure that the County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission were fully aware of our activities and plans," said Becky Gray, Hospitality and Public Relations Manager for Edna Valley.

Issues: Neighbors raised concerns about increased traffic, noise from outdoor music, light pollution and parking problems.

Remedies: Edna Valley started by hosting "neighborly functions" for people who lived within a one-mile radius of the winery. Winery staff listened, carefully and openly, to neighbors' concerns. They asked for suggestions on how to accommodate those concerns and came up with the following solutions:

- Noise: The winery has no outdoor concerts and keeps all amplified music indoors.

- Traffic and Parking: The winery has monitors to ensure that people leaving functions are safe to drive. They work with the county to post directional signs toward winery parking and place staff on site to direct cars to regular and overflow parking.

- Lighting: All lighting faces down and is kept at low levels to avoid light pollution.

- Events: The winery stopped having Friday evening "Wine Down" events because neighbors objected.

Results: Edna Valley continues to host quarterly functions where neighbors can enjoy the winery and voice concerns. They inform neighbors of upcoming events, including types, times, music and number of attendees. "We haven't had a single complaint! The main thing is to keep an open mind, and listen carefully," Gray advises. "Don't be defensive. Be the rational one."