

THE HUMANS OF WINE VOICES*

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What is your perception of the wine business during the Covid-19 emergency?

Where I live, retail stores are considered an essential service and as a corporate wine store, we are still serving the public which we need to do. Unfortunately, people just buy what they know. They don't have a chance to really talk to us as wine professionals to try something different and get outside of their "wine box".

How do you think this emergency is going to change the world of wine?

It will change massively. There are so many facets to this industry and for us, if our importers don't bring in as much wine as they did previously, there is less for me to sell. And when I say less, I mean, quality, small(er) family-based businesses that take a great deal of effort and care in producing something that will stand out amongst the crowded world of wine.

What has already changed in your job?

I'm a glorified shipper right now. I had a calendar full of tasting events and masterclasses ready to share with the public, using my knowledge and credentials, but I'm no longer able to do this, and for the foreseeable future, I will just continue shipping wine, and learning other administrative tasks of the retail wine business.

What do you think are the main challenges for the wine business in this moment?

We all need to learn to be creative. I think your Humans of Wine is brilliant...why not take what we need to do anyway and put it online. I feel bad for restaurants, somms, or those associated with restaurants. Some here are so small anyway; they will most assuredly be closed forever at this point. And will we even WANT to sit in a restaurant in the future? It's a tough call...Everyone will be affected at some level, but I just don't think we have all the information yet. We all must figure out ways to make our companies accessible to everyone in every way.

What do you think could be done to overcome them?

As I said in answer 7, we need to learn to be creative in thinking of other ways to promote business.

What are your activities on social media?

The retail store I work for will post reminders that you as a customer can still buy, but online for pickup or delivery. On a personal level, Joy of Wine (my company) did a 14-day blog post about wines for Isolation. It gained some traction for my website, but the social media outlets of Instagram and Facebook have slowed down to an extent. I do most everything on Instagram, but my posts are intermittent at best. Joy of Wine has not made any money this year at all, as my business was all about educational tastings. That has been halted, so for me, being creative might be doing small YouTube videos about wines. We will see...

How is the promotion of wine going to change?

Promoting wine is about tasting and smelling it. For winemakers, it's those components plus telling us how they made the wine and why they made it that way. We will literally have to rely on our sense of sight and our skill in reading about wines to a higher extent. Those of us that sell wine will still undoubtedly have to taste it at some point, and consumers will have to rely on us to give a full and honest description of the wine to know if it's something they want to purchase. It's a tough question though...we can't send a sample of wine over the internet, nor can we ship to all parts of the universe. In my opinion, promoting wine will be a difficult task to be sure.

Did you have an online shop before the emergency? Do you have it now?

Yes we did. The last busy time was for Christmas! Sometimes up to 50 boxes can go out for delivery per day. That doesn't seem like much but our usual footprint for online orders can maybe be one a day or a few per week.

Did you provide home delivery services before the emergency? Do you provide it now?

Yes, and yes. That platform has not changed.

Have you seen a change in sales?

We will. When this all started it was still a very slow time of year, and before the store closed to the public, we still had the same amount of traffic, but much more product was going out the door, perhaps with people anticipating staying home. Now that the weather and season is changing, it will be tougher perhaps? People tend to get more active and want to go out. Our sales that normally would see an increase in the spring months (Easter and May long weekend) as well as our store events that we normally have during this time will see a decline in sales. We are staying consistent, but I think we would be doing better sale wise if it were "business as usual".

Are you currently running special offers?

Some. Now that rose season is here, we will be ramping that up to hopefully get more people to order rose. We are also doing weekly "virtual tasting" videos as a store to also help promote products. We will have the bottles on-line with a link to the virtual tasting and then from the virtual tasting, links to buy their products online.

