

## Play at the Pump

Calistoga's Tank Garage beckons a new generation of wine drinkers

BY FLORA TSAPOVSKY

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FILL 'ER UP It would be really cool if those pumps flowed with wine.

"I don't want to say millennials," says James Harder, co-owner of Tank Garage Winery in Calistoga, when asked how the wine industry has changed in the last decade. He doesn't really have to.

Tank Garage, situated in a restored 1930s service station on Highway 128, speaks volumes to the new wave of the region's winetasting culture. With its hip, old-meets-new exterior, vintage pinball machines and a slick "speakeasy" lounge in the back, the new project from two wine-industry veterans is as millennial-friendly as they come: experiential, photogenic, easy on the educational info and big on fun.

Tank Garage is a joint venture of Jim Regusci, a third-generation Napa Valley native and owner of Regusci Winery, and Harder, formerly a VP at Vincor International and currently the owner of James Cole Winery and T-Vine Winery. As with many local projects utilizing historical locations, Tank Garage's inception was lengthy and involved endless permits and a detailed restoration process, not to mention hauling all the antiques from Harder's vast art deco collection to the property.

"There are so many chateaux, historic farmhouses, castles," Harder says, "but we wanted something that the consumer, or the emerging consumer, won't be intimidated by."

Tank Garage brings play and experimentation into the wine as well. Both Harder and Regusci's wineries specialize in Cabernet Sauvignon, "but Tank lets us experiment," Harder says. How? By outsourcing grapes from all over Northern California and creating blends, which 30-year-old winemaker Bertus van Zyl, originally from Cape Town, South Africa, bottles and pours for the crowds. Harder calls it "stylistic winemaking"—not relying on one site, but blending and being creative.

Catchy names and bold labels are part of the fun at Tank Garage. Stars Like Ours rosé (a blend of Pinot Noir, Grenache Noir and Syrah Noir) comes with a vintage photo illustrated with red stars. The All or Nothing red is adorned with a surreal painting. Boy Loves Girl is a white blend with a Roy Lichtenstein-style label. The label for the Nothing Gold Can Stay Chardonnay was designed by Bronx graffiti artist T-Kid. Bottles range from \$30 to \$65.

"I came in the business over 20 years ago and everything was bound by tradition," says Harder. "I think the emerging consumer—people that have been coming into the wine game in the recent 10 years—knows there are no rules, especially with all the craft beers and mixology going on. They have no preconceived notions."

These consumers might even end up contributing to the label. Harder recalls a customer taking a photo of her dad at the winery that later appeared on the label of a limited-edition wine called Hannah's Dad. This anything-goes attitude is very much in the Tank Garage style.

"You want to talk about wine," says Harder. "We'll tell you about it, but you want to talk about weather, pinball, sports team? We're game too. We have an approach of talking *with* [customers], not *to* them."

You don't have to be a millennial to enjoy that.