



Bar Codes Make Tracking Wine Barrels Easy

*For all your RFID and metal asset identification needs contact **idtracon** the authorised agent for Metalcraft in the Australasian Region.*

Raymond Vineyards' barrel tracking reinforces winemaking tradition

Problem:

Winemaking traditions go back for centuries, but technology is challenging some of the long standing methods of producing excellent wines. Even wine's barrel aging is evolving alongside advances in irrigation, corking systems, vine genetics and disease control. Still, simply keeping better track of wine barrels and their contents is one way technology can reinforce good winemaking tradition.

Raymond Vineyards has plenty of tradition. It was founded in 1971 in Napa Valley, California. Five generations of the Raymond family have produced wine there, going back to Roy Raymond Snr arrival in 1933 as a cellar worker at Beringer Brothers Winery. Today, the Raymond family and staff have four wine collections in their portfolio, producing Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay on 650 acres in four vineyards.

The original 90 acre estate vineyard is in the geographic heart of Napa Valley, between the towns of St. Helena and Rutherford with Raymond's winery located there, too. That's where assistant winemaker Kathy George helps Raymond manage approximately 10,000 barrels spread across two buildings.

Like many wineries, Raymond had long kept paper records on their wine production; grouping into 50 to 100 barrel lots helped manage the process. While each barrel's cooper, wood and year is stamped on the barrel head, the toast and other information about the barrel and its contents would sometimes get lost.

"We were buying barrels from a lot of coopers, experimenting with toast levels, two barrels at a time," says George. "We would occasionally lose a slip of paper." It was time to find a better way to capture and keep information.

Solution:

In 2001, Raymond Vineyards paid a visit to a neighbouring Napa winery and saw the reliability of barcode data coupled with handheld scanners and winery management software. They invested in the same system The Winemaker's Database software, Symbol handheld scanners and barcode nameplates from Metalcraft that are designed specifically for wine barrel tracking applications.

Now, as a new barrel comes in, it is assigned a number associated with a description in Raymond's database. That number matches the Metalcraft barcode nameplate attached to the body of the barrel between the hoops near the rim. The barcode links each barrel to records about its cooperage and contents. Even the empty barrels are important assets; they have at least a four year lifespan and cost over \$800 each.

Barrels are scanned each time they are handled and when filled, topped, tasted, emptied, cleaned or otherwise altered. All of that individual barrel activity across 10,000 barrels at Raymond Winery generates a lot of useful data.

Result:

"Winemaking still takes the same amount of time," says George. "But I have access to much more information. Now Raymond's longstanding quality controls are well documented. I'm assured that every step has been taken."

Indeed, George says timesaving isn't the core value of Raymond's barcode system; rather, it's about capturing and keeping more data.

"When you're generating so much information, it can be hard to retain everything," says George. "Just having access to good information during tasting has been very beneficial."

She points to another technology, Raymond's new barrel handling line for evidence of the benefits of bar coding.

"Handling barrels has always been a bottleneck," she says. "Getting wine into barrels is a big job. I'm interested in assuring quantity, that we have 50 barrels filled versus 48, for example."

The barrel line also hosts the emptying and cleaning cycles, which are important points for the barcode data link. When not in the line, barrels are placed in tandem racks and stacked five racks high.

"It is a tough environment," she says. "the stacking of barrels could cause scuffing but the bar code nameplates stood up and could still be read."

George says bar coding helps Raymond Vineyards serve other wine-making clients, too. Crushing and storing others' grapes requires a close watch on individual barrels, in part due to the "breakdown cooperage" smaller wine containers used to eliminate partially filled barrels.

"It is easier to misplace a 5 or 7 gallon container than a 60 gallon barrel," says George.

Bar coding makes this growing new line of business more manageable for Raymond Vineyards.

"Metalcraft's barcode nameplates are an efficient and cost effective link to modern winemaking database applications and withstand sustained exposure to a winemaking environment," said Frank Rombi, a California-based sales representative for Metalcraft. "It's great to see Raymond's investment in tracking their biggest assets the wine barrels and their contents bearing fruit."

Call **0490 039 278** or visit **www.idtracon.com.au** for more information on **idtracon** bar code asset tags and their customers solutions.

idtracon Case Study



Phone: 0490 039 278
www.idtracon.com.au
email: sales@idtracon.com.au