

Quarry Lane Cellars — Business Plan

Winery in Lodi, CA · Startup plan

Executive summary

Quarry Lane Cellars is a new winery in Lodi, CA offering estate-labelled red and white wines, 500 cases a year; tastings by appointment at the winery; a wine club with two shipments a year; online sales shipped to the states that allow it; small private events and release parties; and wholesale to a few local restaurants and shops. The model is a small bonded winery making a 500-case vintage from purchased grapes in a leased light-industrial unit — tanks, a bladder press, a dozen barrels and a mobile bottler — and selling almost everything direct: by appointment, through a wine club and online.

Startup budget: \$79,809 across 14 items, funded from savings. Target: \$12,000 in monthly sales.

Twelve months from now, success looks like this: The first vintage bottled — 500 cases — and 360 of them sold by the end of the first year of sales: thirty cases a month at \$32 a bottle — \$11,520 — and two dozen tastings a month at \$20, for about \$12,000 a month, with a wine club of 150 members carrying the slow months

Products and services

Quarry Lane Cellars' core product is estate-labelled red and white wines, 500 cases a year. Grapes are bought by the ton from local growers, crushed and fermented in the fall, aged through the winter and bottled in the spring; every bottle is priced for direct sale, with the club getting the first allocation and the best price.

- Estate-labelled red and white wines, 500 cases a year
 - Tastings by appointment at the winery
 - A wine club with two shipments a year
 - Online sales shipped to the states that allow it
 - Small private events and release parties
 - Wholesale to a few local restaurants and shops
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Market analysis

The customers are locals and visitors who want to taste with the winemaker; the club members whose two shipments a year carry the rent; online buyers in the states you can ship to; couples and small groups booking a private tasting; and a few restaurants and shops that want a local label.

- Locals and weekend visitors who want to taste with the winemaker, not a tasting-room script
 - Wine club members — the 150 households whose shipments pay the rent
 - Online buyers in the states you can ship to, found through the club and the reviews
 - Couples and small groups booking a private tasting or a release party
 - A few restaurants and bottle shops that want a local label on the list
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Marketing strategy

Most wine will sell at the tasting table, through the club it feeds and by word of mouth; the rest of the customers find Quarry Lane Cellars on Google — “winery near me”, “wine tasting” plus the town — and through the wine trail, the restaurants that pour it and Instagram, so the Google Business Profile, the reviews, the email list and a website with online ordering and the club sign-up decide whether a visit becomes a member.

- Google Business Profile and Google — “winery near me” and “wine tasting” plus your town, with the hours, the booking link and the reviews
 - The wine club: every tasting ends with the club offer, and the club is the business
 - Instagram — harvest, the cellar, the pour, the label — and the email list it feeds
 - Local restaurants, bottle shops, hotels and wedding venues that pour or recommend you
 - Regional wine trails, festivals and the county's visitor bureau
 - A website with the wines, online ordering, the club sign-up, tasting bookings and your story
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Operations plan

The owner is the winemaker, the cellar hand and the host in year one, with help hired for the six weeks of harvest and the bottling day; the federal permit and the state license come before the first grape, the label approval before the first bottle, and the bonded inventory is the tax record.

- Federal permits first: the TTB basic permit and bonded winery registration (free, and months of lead time), then the state winery license and the city's zoning sign-off
 - Grapes contracted by the ton from growers before harvest; the crush, the fermentation and the press in the first six weeks of fall
 - Whites and rosé to tank, reds to barrel; racking, sulfite and lab checks through the winter; a mobile bottler in the spring
 - Label approval from TTB before bottling; excise tax returns and operations reports on the TTB calendar
 - Tastings by appointment, the club shipments twice a year, online orders shipped ground with an adult signature
 - Every bottle tracked from tank to sale — the bonded inventory is the tax record
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Startup costs

What it will take to open the doors, funded from savings.

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
Grapes: eight tons for the first 500 cases	\$7,947
Variable-capacity stainless tanks	\$11,590
Crusher-destemmer and a bladder press	\$4,290
Barrels for the reds (twelve, used to new French oak)	\$8,400
Pump, hoses, fermentation bins, a lab kit, a barrel rack and cleaning gear	\$3,500
Bottles, corks, capsules and labels for 500 cases	\$14,161
A mobile bottling line for 500 cases	\$2,113
Lease deposit and first month on about 1,500 square feet	\$4,016
Fit-out: floor drains, water, power for the tanks, insulation and a cold room	\$12,500
TTB permit (free), state winery license and label approvals	\$1,550
LLC, EIN, seller's permit and the free FDA food facility registration	\$170
Insurance: the first month (liability, liquor liability, stock)	\$350
Website, online ordering and the club sign-up	\$0
Working capital: two months of running costs	\$9,222
Total	\$79,809

Typical range to start a winery in the US: \$45,336–\$116,280. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Website, online ordering and the club sign-up: Your Zarla plan includes the website — the wines, online ordering, the club sign-up, tasting bookings and your story — and walks you through your Google Business Profile. Having one built typically costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 from a freelancer.

Financial plan

The numbers below come from your own startup list and typical monthly costs for a 500-case winery in the US. Startup is heavy — grapes, tanks, barrels, glass and the fit-out — and the first sale is nearly a year away, so the working capital is as real as the equipment; the monthly lines are rent, insurance, utilities and compliance, and the price per bottle and the club decide what is left.

Typical monthly operating costs for a winery: \$2,062–\$7,895 a month, before the owner's own pay.

At \$12,000 in monthly sales, Quarry Lane Cellars would clear \$4,105–\$9,938 a month before owner pay and tax, and recover the \$79,809 startup budget in roughly 9–20 months.

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
Rent on about 1,500 square feet	\$809–\$3,206
Liability, liquor liability and stock insurance	\$125–\$575
Power, water and gas (the cold room and the glycol run all year)	\$300–\$800
Yeast, nutrients, sulfite, fining agents, lab tests and cleaning chemicals	\$150–\$400
Federal and state excise tax, reports and shipping compliance	\$7–\$300
Cartons, ice packs and carrier costs on club and online orders (mostly billed on)	\$100–\$400
Harvest and bottling help, averaged over the year	\$0–\$1,000
Ads, festivals, wine-trail dues and the club emails	\$200–\$600
Point of sale, the wine club and email (included with Zarla)	\$50–\$200
Card fees (on about \$12,000 of sales)	\$321–\$414

US ranges for a small operation; replace with your own figures as you learn them. Lines marked (included with Zarla) are what those tools cost separately — with Zarla they are part of one monthly plan.

Risks and honest downsides

Every winery plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For Quarry Lane Cellars, the real risks are:

- The money goes out in September and the first wine sells the next summer — the reds the summer after — so the first year is paid from savings, not sales
- The US wine market shrank in 2025 — sales fell to \$74.3 billion and direct shipments dropped 15% — and a new label sells on the club and the tasting table, not on the shelf
- Harvest is six weeks of twelve-hour days, and a stuck fermentation or a fruit-fly summer can cost a tank
- Every permit has a lead time — the federal permit, the state license, the label approval — and a bottling date missed is a vintage sold late
- Direct shipping is a state-by-state maze, and one unlicensed shipment is a violation in two states
- The club is the business: a 150-member club taking two six-bottle shipments a year is 1,800 bottles — a third of the vintage — and a 20% churn is 360 bottles to resell

Licenses, permits and insurance

What Quarry Lane Cellars needs before it can legally trade in the US. Rules vary by state and city — confirm each item with your local licensing office and an accountant.

- TTB basic permit and bonded winery registration — In the US every winery holds a federal basic permit under the Federal Alcohol Administration Act and registers its premises as a bonded winery with the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau — through Permits Online, with no fee. The wine bond is waived for a winery that owes no more than \$50,000 of excise tax a year and pays it annually, quarterly or semimonthly; new applicants tick the exemption on the application. File early: the permit is the long pole, and no wine can be made until it is issued.
- Federal excise tax and TTB reports — In the US still wine up to 16% alcohol is taxed at \$1.07 a wine gallon, and the Craft Beverage Modernization Act credit takes \$1.00 off the first 30,000 gallons a domestic producer removes each year — 7¢ a gallon for a small winery — with smaller credits to 750,000 gallons. The tax is paid when wine leaves bond for sale, on TTB's return and operations-report calendar; a small winery files quarterly or annually.
- State winery license, excise and sales tax — In the US the state license is the cost: Washington's domestic winery license is \$100 a year under 250,000 liters (\$400 above), California's Type 02 winegrower is \$155 a year up to 5,000 gallons (\$215 for a duplicate at a second tasting room) and the Texas winery permit is \$3,000 for two years. Each state adds its own excise tax, a seller's permit for the sales tax on bottles and tastings, and the city's zoning and occupancy sign-off for a tasting room. Confirm your state's schedule with its alcohol board.
- Label approval before bottling — In the US every label goes to TTB for a Certificate of Label Approval — free, online — before the wine is bottled for sale: brand, class, alcohol content, net contents, the sulfite declaration and the government warning in the required size. A varietal or appellation claim has to be true to the grapes' paperwork.
- FDA food facility registration — In the US a winery is a food facility: it registers with the Food and Drug Administration before it operates — free — and renews between October 1 and December 31 of every even-numbered year.
- Direct shipping to other states — In the US shipping wine to a consumer in another state takes that state's direct-shipper permit, its sales and excise tax registration and its reports — one state at a time — and the carriers require an alcohol shipping agreement and an adult signature on delivery. Start with your own state and the three or four that hold most of your list; a compliance service files the rest when the club grows. Confirm each state's rules before the first shipment.
- Business registration, an EIN and a seller's permit — In the US most wineries form an LLC with their state — \$40 in Kentucky, \$300 in Texas, and California charges an \$800 yearly LLC tax on top of its filing fee — take a free EIN from the IRS and register for the state's sales tax before the first bottle sells. Confirm the entity choice with your accountant.

Milestones: the next 30 days

The first month's to-do list for Quarry Lane Cellars, in order:

- Decide the first vintage — the grapes, the tonnage, the style — and talk to three growers about contracts for the fall
- Decide between your own bonded premises and a custom crush or alternating proprietorship at an existing winery, and price both
- Form the LLC, take the free EIN, register with the FDA, and start the TTB application in Permits Online
- Apply for the state winery license and ask the city about zoning for production and a tasting area
- Find the unit — drains, water, power, a cold corner — and get the landlord's consent to a winery
- Price tanks, the crusher, the press and a dozen barrels, and book a mobile bottler for the spring
- Design the label and submit it to TTB for approval well before bottling
- Get liability, liquor and stock insurance quotes, and put the website live with the club sign-up and tasting bookings
- Start the email list now — every tasting, every market, every friend — the club launches with the first release

Appendix: what a lender will ask for

This plan tells the story and shows the numbers. If you take it to a bank, expect to be asked for these documents as well:

- Two years of personal tax returns and a personal financial statement
- The TTB permit and state license, or the filed applications with their dates
- A month-by-month cash-flow projection from crush to the first sale, and the club's shipment calendar
- Grape contracts or letters from growers, and quotes for the tanks, barrels and bottling
- The lease or the custom-crush agreement, and proof of liability and liquor liability insurance
- Your credit report and any winemaking experience or coursework

Sample plan for a fictional business, written by Zarla's free business plan generator. Every figure is a typical US range or calculated from the sample's own numbers — nothing is a market projection. Make it yours in five questions:

zarla.com/business-plan-generator?industry=winery