

Albemarle County Farm Winery Fact Sheet

A farm winery is an establishment located on one or more parcels in Albemarle County licensed as a farm winery under [Virginia Code § 4.1- 207](#). This fact sheet provides an overview of local zoning regulations that apply to farm wineries as well as important information you need to know if you are considering operating a farm winery in Albemarle County.

What do I need to do to begin operating a farm winery in Albemarle County?

- Verify that your property is zoned Rural Areas (RA).
- Contact ABC to apply for a Virginia farm winery license.
- Review [County Code Chapter 18 \(Zoning\) Section 5.1.25](#) for zoning regulations pertaining to farm wineries. Although not required, we recommend scheduling a meeting with Zoning staff to ensure that your farm winery can comply with local zoning regulations.
- If you plan to serve food at the winery, review the Winery Food Service Flow Chart & Fact Sheet and contact the Health Department to obtain any necessary food service permits.
- If outdoor amplified music will be provided at farm winery events, please consider contacting a sound professional for planning and design that ensures the applicable noise standards can be met. This can save expense and inconvenience later and can minimize noise impacts on neighbors.
- If you plan to host events with over 200 attendees, contact Albemarle County's Community Development Department at least five months in advance to review the County's requirements and the process for obtaining a special use permit (see contact information on this sheet).

What kinds of activities are permitted at a farm winery?

- Growing, harvesting & production related to winemaking
- Wine tasting
- Direct sale of wine, wine-related items & incidental gifts (ex. cork screws, wine glasses, t-shirts, hats)
- Wine storage, wholesaling & shipping in accordance with ABC regulations
- Exhibits or museums related to wine or the farm winery
- Events with fewer than 200 attendees at one time (for events with over 200 attendees, a special use permit is required)
- Hayrides
- Tours of the winery & vineyards
- Weddings & wedding receptions (for wedding events with over 200 attendees, a special use permit is required)
- Picnics
- Preparation and sale of finger foods, soups or appetizers*
- Private gatherings held by owner where no wine is sold or marketed

* See food service fact sheet & flow chart for applicable state and local regulations.

What kinds of activities are prohibited at a farm winery?

- Restaurants
- Helicopter rides
- Outdoor amplified music exceeding 60 dBA during the day and 55 dBA at night (see [Chapter 18 \(Zoning\) Section 4.18.04](#))

What requirements apply to farm winery buildings and parking areas?

A permit is required for all new buildings. For structures built after May 5, 2010 and all tents, portable toilets and off-street parking areas, the following setback requirements apply*:

Front (existing public roads)	75 feet
Front (internal public or private road)	25 feet
Side	25 feet
Rear	35 feet

* Minimum setback requirements may be waived by the zoning administrator with written permission of the abutting property owner if there is no harm to the public health, safety or welfare, and no detriment to the abutting lot.

One 9' x 18' parking space is required for every 2.5 customers. For special events and festivals, an additional parking space per employee (winery staff, caterers, musicians & vendors) is required. Additional parking for special events may be provided in a well-drained, suitably graded area adjacent to the required parking area.

Structures may not be located in the flood plain, within stream buffers, or on slopes of 25% or greater. Consult with the Engineering Division in the Community Development Department to determine whether a Water Protection Ordinance plan is required based on the amount of land disturbance proposed for any parking area or building (see contact information on this sheet).

What requirements apply to new entrances and access to a farm winery?

A VDOT permit is required for new and modified entrances onto state roads. Contact the Land Use permitting office at VDOT for applicable requirements (see contact information on this sheet).

Are signs allowed at a farm winery?

Yes. Farm winery signs do not require a sign permit, but certain requirements do apply. Up to two freestanding signs are allowed on-site, provided that the combined sign area does not exceed 32 square feet. Signs can be no more than 10 feet high and must be situated at least 5 feet from the property line. Temporary signs also are allowed with an approved temporary sign permit. Contact the Zoning Division in the Community Development Department for information regarding temporary sign permits (see contact information on this sheet).

What do I need to do to host a farm winery event with over 200 attendees?

Contact the Community Development Department to discuss application requirements for a special use permit. You will need to provide the following information (items marked by an asterisk (*) should be indicated on a sketch plan or schematic drawing of the site):

- A description of activities taking place at the event
- The maximum number of anticipated attendees
- The duration and frequency of the event
- Structures to be used*
- Provisions for on-site parking*
- Location, height & lumens of all outdoor lighting*
- Location of any stage, structure, or area used for musical performances*
- Event-related signage*
- Mitigation measures to offset adverse impacts on adjoining properties

Contact Information

Virginia

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) – John Craft, Senior Special Agent, john.craft@abc.virginia.gov (540) 332-7803

Department of Health, Thomas Jefferson Health District – Eric Myers, EH Supervisor, Food Service; Bill Craun, EH Supervisor, Water Supply/ Sewage Disposal (434) 972-6219

Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS) – Allyn Olinger, Food Safety Specialist (434) 326-2478

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) - Land use permitting office (434) 589-1013

Albemarle County

Community Development - (434) 296-5832

Zoning Division - Amanda Burbage, aburbage@albemarle.org (434) 296-5832 x3023

Zoning Division (sign permits) – Stewart Wright, swright2@albemarle.org (434) 296-5832 x3024

Building Services Division - Jay Schlothauer, Building Official, jschloth@albemarle.org (434) 296-5832 x3228

Engineering Division – Glenn Brooks, gbrooks@albemarle.org (434) 296-5832 x3273