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Next generation, new packaging

BY **Tina Viers**

Two Mountain Winery in Washington's Yakima Valley launched its first vintage in 2002. Owner Ron Schmidt and his nephew Matthew Rawn had first planted vineyards in 2001. Matthew's brother Patrick joined them in 2004, and by 2005 production had risen to 3,000 cases per year.

In 2006, when their uncle died, the Rawn brothers bought the winery from their late uncle's estate, and started planning its growth. Patrick is general manager of the winery, overseeing 26 acres of vineyard, and shares sales and marketing duties with winemaker Matthew.

The Rawns decided that the next generation of the family-owned winery would have labels for Two Mountain

Winery (TMW) that would bridge the gap between classic wine packaging and a contemporary look to appeal to new customers. “Time for the brand to grow up,” states Matthew.

They brought back the designer of Two Mountain's original packaging, Deb Ashbeck (Richland, WA), who was enthusiastic about updating the brand. Ashbeck has worked with several wineries, developed the logo and marketing art for the Columbia Valley Winery Association, and designed food packaging for Whole Foods Markets and Costco Wholesale.

Patrick recalls, “We talked for hours about our goals and what we liked, what we wanted, what the package should portray with Deb. We had dozens of magazines; Matt and I had been collecting label materials we liked from other wines as samples. We wanted a label that looks contemporary but classic at the same time.”

Ashbeck returned to her studio and produced ten mock-ups. Matthew reports the brothers tried them all out on everyone they knew. “We are not graphic artists,” he laughs. “We took all the opinions we could get — our mom, girlfriends, neighbors, other wineries; they became our own unpaid focus group. Elements from nearly all of the original mock-ups made it into the final design. Near the end of the process, we put mock-ups of the semi-final choices in the tasting room and asked customers for feedback.”

Label design completed

The end result is a matte-black label (on most of the wines) with bands of foil color at top and bottom, a crisply elegant swash of the number “2,” a cleaner version of the original TMW logo, and clean text elements similar to typefaces on the original label, for the winery name and wine information.

“We're not complicated people, so we didn't want a fussy or cluttered look for our wines,” explains Patrick. “We wanted to pay homage to the past, so the original logo is there. We also wanted traditional wine industry elements like the bands at top and bot-

tom. But we kept the overall look clean and simple.”

The Rawns brought variation to the new look by changing foil colors on the labels according to wine variety. Labels on three flagship wines — Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah — all have copper foil on a black background. The Cabernet Franc label has rose-colored foil, the Lemberger's foil is seafoam green, and the Red Table Wine's foil is red. The Riesling is in a blue bottle, so the label stock was changed to clear, and silver foil is used. The labels are printed by Metro Label Pacific (Langley, British Columbia).

Transition to the new labels began in October 2007 and was complete on all wines with the bottling of the 2007 Riesling, in March 2008. The winery is using the same glass and corks, although they'll be changing the capsules to custom foils with the updated

TMW logo later in 2008. The Rawns bottle wine with a semi-automatic GAI 12-head monobloc into shiners, and then use a tabletop labeler and capsuler as they need finished packages.

Results with new package

The Rawn brothers have made sales calls with the new packaging and obtained immediate positive results. “Our retailers and restaurants were 110% positive about the new look. It's been extremely well-received,” Matthew reports. Sales of the wines are up 41% over the same period in 2007.

“Over the next four or five years, we'd like to grow production to 6,000 or 7,000 cases, and hold it there,” says Patrick.

One of Patrick's goals for the winery was achieved when the new packaging convinced some national and interna-

tional distributors to take on Two Mountain wines. Once available only in Washington state, the wines were placed in four states and Japan in early 2008.

Next steps in re-branding

The brothers are continuing with the re-branding of Two Mountain Winery in sensible steps. Business stationery and the new website were launched in early June 2008, and design of further materials with the new look (sales kits, folders, rack cards) was under way, with printing planned for late summer and fall 2008.

“The most important step with the upcoming items is to cement the re-branding,” Ashbeck notes, “with a consistency of design throughout all of Two Mountain's materials, including a marketing package with updated wine specifications and photography, a

brochure with the winery story, and awards and events mailings in conjunction with Two Mountain's public relations agency.

“The goal of these materials will be to deliver Two Mountain's message, confirm the value of their wines, continue to build customer loyalty, and motivate their buyers.” ■