

Hat Ranch Winery buying Vale Wine Co.

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Hat Ranch Winery is buying Vale Wine Co. The two wineries, both located near Caldwell, have partnered and shared winemaking equipment in the past. Both wine labels will still be available for sale after the deal is completed at the end of the year.

Hat Ranch owner and winemaker Tim Harless said the acquisition gets him an existing brand as well as equipment like a grape press and de-stemmer that Hat Ranch needs to make wine that it doesn't already have.

"We didn't have any production facilities of our own," he said. "They wanted to get out and we wanted to ramp up, so this made perfect sense."

Vale winemaker John Danielson will stay on as a winemaking consultant for the combined winery. Harless said Hat Ranch sales associate Harmony Wright will also assist in the wine making process.

Harless said the two wineries produce approximately 1,500 cases of wine a year, with all the grapes coming from the Snake River Valley American Viticultural Area. Hat Ranch has 6 acres of land for grapes, half of which has been planted with moscato and sauvignon blanc grapes. Harless said next year he will plant another 1.5 acres with tempranillo grapes, which he said have proven to be a good grape varietal for other Idaho wineries.

"It seems like it's a real good fit for our weather," he said, saying tempranillo grapes fare well during long, hot days. Once the 6 acres are full and producing, an estimated five years from now, they will produce about 1,000 cases worth of wine.

The terms of the deal were not released.