

WGNS Protocol in Response to COVID-19

The Nova Scotia Wine industry generates over 934 jobs in Nova Scotia, mainly in rural communities, and there is no denying that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents our industry, and country at large, with an incredible challenge. Beyond just providing wine, our wineries provide a warm welcome to spaces where our community can gather to enjoy local product, and support the supply chain from farm to table.

Our industry continues to prove to be a resilient one and more than ever, we sincerely appreciate our community for continuing to choose to support our local industry. As we welcome visitors back to the wineries and look to share our passion for wine and provide exceptional experiences, the number one priority of the Nova Scotia wine community is ensuring the safety of our guests, communities, employees, and their families.

This document summarizes best practices for your winery, including a variety of areas from retail operations to winery experiences, which comply with government regulations. We recognise that every winery operates differently, so each recommendation is based on standard operations and can be modified within health authority regulations to suit the needs of individual wineries. This document does not constitute legal advice but intended to convey general information and recommend each winery to develop their own site-specific plan following government regulations.

Winery and Retail

- NS wineries should post information on hand washing best practices and ensure signage is located throughout the winery to remind all guests of proper hand washing techniques and request guests to sanitize prior to entry or upon entry.
- NS wineries should post signage promoting distancing upon entry to the winery and all facilities indicating maximum number of guests according to current social distancing (2 metres) and government regulations. Fact sheets and posters can be located on the [Government of Nova Scotia website \(https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/resources/\)](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/resources/).
- NS wineries should determine maximum capacity for retail store or winery boutique adhering to government mandates.
- NS wineries should offer sanitizing stations at entry and exit points. Increase the regularity of scheduled cleanings and ventilation where possible; regularly clean and sanitize the common areas – door handles, fridge door handles, automatic door operator plates, pin pads, countertops, phones, equipment, service tools and anything hands touch.
- Where possible, NS wineries should set up acrylic shields at cash, reception and host/greeter stations.
- NS wineries are encouraged to use debit/credit for sales; if cash is handled, please follow surface area cleaning guidelines. Encourage the use of tap where possible and receipts in the bag or box.
- Where possible, discourage handling of items by clients through signage, display cases, or storing merchandise behind the counter.
- NS wineries should increase scheduled cleanings of public and staff washrooms.

- NS wineries should ensure their sanitizing solutions are mixed as per manufacturer's directions and change the solution and cleaning cloth often.
- NS wineries should remove furniture and public seating areas in lobbies.
- Where possible, NS wineries should provide extra waste bins/garbage receptacles throughout the visiting spaces, to remember to empty receptacles frequently and to wash hands on completion.
- All waste bins/garbage receptacles must contain garbage bags, especially when disposing of single use items such as plastic glassware and spittoons.
- It is recommended that the waste bins/garbage receptacles used have a lid and foot pedal. At the end of the working day, all bins must be emptied and placed outside in a proper garbage receptacle. Staff must thoroughly wash their hands after completing this task.
- NS wineries should leave doors open that are not critical to safety protocols.
- NS wineries should separate entry and exit points established, where possible. If not possible to have separate entry and exit points, signage is recommended to indicate to guests to follow social distancing upon entry and allow guests to exit first.
- NS wineries should place two-metre markers on ground where lines may occur (i.e. washrooms, reception desk, entrance, etc.) and arrows directing the flow of traffic.

Winery Employers and Management

- Employers or management should provide a written sick policy with reference points on COVID-19 instruction for employees (include the advice outlined in this document).
- NS wineries should make every effort to communicate regularly with their employees to ensure they have the information and support that they need to stay healthy during the COVID-19 crisis. Fact sheets and posters can be located on the [Government of Nova Scotia website \(https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/resources/\)](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/resources/).
- Employees who do not feel well need to be instructed to stay at home and complete the 811 online self-assessment. The severity of COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can lead to death. Current information suggests most people do not experience severe illness or need to be hospitalized. For up to date information on COVID-19 symptoms, please refer to the Government of Nova Scotia website (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/when-to-seek-help/>).
- If feasible, NS wineries will keep a registry of guests (main contact), employees, couriers, and deliveries, in order to facilitate any necessary contact tracing by Public Health. This is not an open sign-in book and should be kept and managed privately by the winery.
- NS wineries should make every effort to provide employee training specifically related to COVID-19 on hand washing, sanitary standards, respiratory etiquette (coughing and sneezing in sleeve), avoidance of touching face and safe work practices.

- Employers or management should implement team scheduling where possible with rotating shifts to avoid cross-contamination.
- NS wineries should assign attendants to specifically, continually sanitize washrooms.
- If pre-shift briefings are conducted, ideally they should be outside.
- NS wineries should ensure employees are aware of COVID-19 symptoms and be supported and feel comfortable in not serving a guest who is demonstrating the symptoms.
- NS wineries should supply individual hand sanitizer for employees.
- NS wineries should encourage physical distancing where possible during shift.
- NS wineries should encourage employees to not come into contact with staff from an alternate team during shift.
- If possible, NS wineries should designate separate lunch or break rooms that accommodate social distancing (2 metres) between employees. Break rooms to be cleaned frequently and used primarily for lunch storage and not consumption. Encourage breaks to be outside when possible.

Winery Team and Employees

- NS winery employees should practice social distancing (2 metres) and self-monitor their own health which includes not coming to work if feeling unwell.
- For employees that cannot always physically distance 2 metres (6 feet) from other staff or customers, encourage the use of non-medical masks or face coverings
- If uniforms are practiced, NS winery employees should arrive for shift in uniform and wash uniform following each shift.
- Employees are not permitted to have personal items on the floor.
- Frequent hand washing (preferred) or sanitizing is the best protective measure and the use of signage to remind guests and employees of proper hand washing etiquette recommended.
- NS winery employees should regularly clean their workspaces including the register and computer keyboards and should wash or sanitize their hands on a frequent basis.
- Breaks to be taken outside when possible.
- Encourage employees to report any unsafe practices that come to their attention and come forward with any recommendations on safer practices.

Events & Tours

- NS wineries should continue to postpone larger events and gatherings and review as more information becomes available and as government mandates the size of gatherings.
- NS wineries should eliminate high-hand touch features from any tours, remind guests to sanitize their hands, sneeze/cough into their sleeve and make efforts to limit the number of people on the tour to secure safe social distancing (2 metres).

Tasting Room & Spittoon

- NS wineries should highly encourage reservations.
- If possible, NS wineries should designate a “greeter” to control tasting locations separate from the retail stores.
- NS wineries are recommended to implement policies where customers can be refused entry if displaying signs of fever and/or cough, or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Through signage or an employee, customers are reminded to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon entrance.
- NS wineries should avoid overcrowding tasting rooms and determine a safe maximum capacity for each tasting or experience based on physical distancing guidelines (2 metres).
- When NS wineries are creating tasting pods they must follow the social gathering numbers set out in the Public Health order as modified from time to time at <https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/>.
- Customers can only be served and consume alcohol seated and must remain seated at their table for the duration, except while waiting to be seated, going to the bathroom, participating in an activity such as the purchase of wine bottles in the establishment and getting ready to leave.
- NS wineries should use signs promoting physical distancing and two-meter markers at each experience or station.
- NS winery staff should sanitize the tasting room counter after every tasting.
- NS wineries should move to individual disposable containers versus freestanding spittoons that require sharing or reaching over other people to spit into. Consider identifying or initialing individual disposable containers to avoid mix-up.
- If not using disposable tasting glassware, glassware to be used and cleaned in restaurant grade washers after each use. Test your dishwasher throughout the day with appropriate test strips to ensure the proper temperature is reached and adequate sanitary chemical is dispensed. Failing this, please move to disposable glassware.
- NS winery employees emptying spittoons or disposing of glassware should wear disposable gloves and wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after.

- NS wineries should keep bottles from being touched by guests and make sure every wine bottle being poured never touches the patron's wine glass. If the bottle touches the lip of the glass it is a potential cross contamination point.
- NS wineries should minimize common touch points and eliminate shared crackers, chocolates, nuts or any items in the tasting room or on the tasting bar that could be common touch points.
- NS wineries and winery restaurants should provide disposable tasting menus and new menus for each tasting OR laminated menus to be wiped down after each use
- Alcohol can only be consumed through in-seat service at either a table or a tasting station and alcohol can only be served by staff to the table or a tasting station
- Orders to be collected by retail staff to prevent guests from touching multiple surfaces.

Winery Restaurants

- For employees that cannot always physically distance 2 metres (6 feet) from other staff or customers, encourage the use of non-medical masks or face coverings
- NS winery restaurants should follow the approved RANS ([Restaurant COVID-19 Rapid Recovery Guide](http://www.restaurantscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RC_COVID19_Reopening_BestPractices.pdf))
http://www.restaurantscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RC_COVID19_Reopening_BestPractices.pdf

Resource Links

Government of Nova Scotia	<p><u>Reopening Nova Scotia - https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/</u></p> <p>Nova Scotia Public Health Order - <u>https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf</u></p> <p>Nova Scotia Restriction Updates - <u>https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/restriction-updates/</u></p>
Health & Hygiene	<p><u>World Health Organization – hand hygiene practices https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/inaugural-who-partners-forum/who-interim-recommendation-on-obligatory-hand-hygiene-against-transmission-of-covid-19.pdf</u></p> <p><u>Government of Canada – cleaning and disinfecting https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html</u></p>
Wine Region Documents	<p><u>British Columbia - https://winebc.com/industry/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/BCWineryProtocol_Covid19_Final.pdf</u></p> <p><u>Ontario- https://mcusercontent.com/81d68cd1a4eadc0aa9767ded5/files/f11f63eb-cc2d-4e25-99a0-44bbba3416b6/Safe_and_Welcome_in_Wine_Country_FINAL.pdf</u></p> <p><u>California - https://wineinstitute.org/our-work/compliance/covid-19-updates/tasting-room-guidance/</u></p>