

## CONCERTS & EVENTS AT YOUR WINERY

### Concerts

Winery concerts range in scale from a Leeuwin Estate event featuring internationally acclaimed artists, to a small winery featuring a lawn concert of local acts. Regardless of the size of the audience or the prominence of the artist, the benefits are often the same.

The point of holding a concert on site is to market your product, build your brand and sometimes to profit from ticket sales. Think carefully about your annual calendar – do you want to become a regular concert venue, or is your idea a one-off to promote something (a product) in particular? You'll need to have at least one of two things: the funding to bring in a high-profile, drawcard act or ready access to excellent local acts.

You also need to consider your target audiences' musical tastes. Do NOT just consider your own! Holding a concert should be about attracting new customers and maintaining a relationship with current ones. You may want to feature several different genres of music for one concert to attract a wider range of music listeners/wine lovers.

Do your research and look for acts that consistently make good concert ticket sales. Ask the music reviewer from your local press. If you do not see live music often, you are unlikely to know what's available and what's popular. Ask the local radio DJs and music stores – their staff generally know what's going on. Of course, if you can afford an act with regional, or even national recognition, it's still a good idea to research whether they will sell well in your area and to your target market.

Determine if your concert will be a free or ticketed event, or even a fund-raiser to support a charity or community organisation. Make sure the concert runs smoothly, but remember – wine/food sales are one of the main objectives.

### Events

Just like festivals, events have to be about something. The point of holding an event is to market your product and build your brand. Think carefully about the type of event that would be of interest to people, and to which people.

Some ideas that have been successful on small and large scales are seasonal events (harvest, planting), events linked to a sporting event like a nearby golf tournament, or to a cultural event like Easter weekend or simply hosting a contest. One California winery has an annual chilli (as in chilli con carne) cook-off. Choose something that is popular in your region. Perhaps a cheese-lovers cooking contest featuring recipes made with local products would work and you could ask local food critics with a profile to be judges.

If you feature live music during the event it must be good – and the artists have to play music that fits your target audience. It's also better if the artist has a profile and can act as a drawcard. If you can't afford a good band for the whole time, why not pipe in the right music with CDs and have the band play a short set as a centrepiece.

Don't give one door prize away, like a case of wine to one winner – give 12 (or even 24) bottles away to 12 (or 24) winners. It gets your product and brand into more hands.

**Successful events, whether small or large, have several characteristics in common, including the following.**

- Clear objectives
- Strong theme and image that "makes sense" for the winery or region
- A real point of difference
- Impeccable planning with ample time
- Adequate budget – including marketing and promotion
- Market research
- Strategic, well planned and paid marketing, advertising and promotion
- Good sponsorship – credible in the eyes of the sponsor
- Risk management and contingency plans
- Constant monitoring against the plan
- Evaluation process

## Tips, Strengths & Weaknesses for Concerts & Events

### Strengths

- ❑ Captive audience for education about your brand and sales
- ❑ Exposure to a greater mass market – through various advertising media
- ❑ Helps you to stay in touch with your customers and gather information about them
- ❑ Can broaden your customer base/demographic
- ❑ The event can be tailored to fit your brand and the size of your winery
- ❑ Association with an activity that's non-wine related
- ❑ Exposure to corporate sectors via sponsorship

### Weaknesses

- ❑ You alone take the risk and provide the budget
- ❑ Weather dependent (if outdoors)
- ❑ Insurance can be expensive
- ❑ Facilities and staff – are yours adequate?
- ❑ Security issues
- ❑ Can detract from brand if event doesn't work well

### Good planning is essential

Success begins with 'P':

- P = planning
- P = preparation
- P = promotion
- P = presentation
- P = people
- P = performance

Try using a Gantt chart to plan your event (see below for a very basic example). Free trial Gantt software is available on the Internet.

