



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: March 27, 2023

CASTRO VILLAGE WINE CO.

Application No.: LBR-2022-23-035
Business Name: Castro Village Wine Co.
Business Address: 4121 19th St.
District: District 8
Applicant: Matt Porta, Owner/Manager
Nomination Date: January 25, 2023
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Castro Village Wine Company (CVWC) is a small, boutique wine shop in the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood specializing in the sale of fine California wines. The business was founded in 1980 by partners Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez who sought to use the space to enrich the LGBTQ+ community in the Castro, which had recently been devastated by the 1978 assassination of Harvey Milk. For Swartz and Chavez, the shop's focus on the new, emerging world of California wines, instead of old-world of European wines, would reflect the new community the Castro's LGBTQ+ residents were building and was a symbol of looking forward.

As one of the first wine boutiques in San Francisco to focus exclusively on California wine, the store has grown alongside the wine industry in California over its 43 years. CVWC offers an eclectic assortment of California wines across all styles, regions, and prices, ranging from blockbuster reds from Napa Valley to exciting blends from Paso Robles to new offerings from small up-and-coming wine makers.

Additionally, as one of the oldest LGBT-owned businesses in the neighborhood, CVWC aims to provide an inclusive and welcoming space for anyone interested in wine and wine culture. In the store, residents and visitors, with varying levels of experience and exposure, can receive friendly, unintimidating wine education, attend wine tastings, and commune with other patrons. CVWC also is committed to providing first jobs, mentorship, and development to women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ folks interested in wine and spirits.

Preceding Boyd's retirement in 2011, the business was purchased by loyal customers Matt Porta and James Kelm, operating as Castro Wine Ventures LLP. Today, CVWC is a member of the Castro Merchants Association, contributor to various community organizations and schools, and remains an out and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community.

CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Castro Village Wine Co. has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

4121 19th St. from 1980 to Present (43 years)

Legacy Business Program

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City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org





CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, Castro Village Wine Co. has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with the cultural tradition of wine and wine making.
- The property at 4121 19th Street is an example of the Classical Revival-style of architecture expressed in Eureka Valley from the 1900s to the 1920s. Constructed in 1904, the commercial building has one rounded bay and four square bays at the second floor with pilaster window surrounds. The façade has extensive Classical Revival roofline detailing including egg and dart molding, a modillion cornice, and a wide frieze with applied garland ornament. The property at 4121 19th Street is also located within the California Register-Eligible Castro Street Historic District. The area surrounding the property consists primarily of two- and three-story mixed-use buildings (ground floor commercial with upper story residential flats) that were constructed during the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. The area exhibits a predominant 'Victorian-era' and "Edwardian-era" architectural character, and includes styles such as Italianate, Stick-Eastlake, Queen Anne, and Edwardian; and a few examples of Classical Revival, Art Deco, Mediterranean Revival, and 20th century Commercial. (Historic Resource Evaluation Response: Case No. 2013.0160E)

Additionally, founders Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez were a part of the Lavender Wave that helped establish the LGBTQ+ Castro community in the 1970s and 1980s.

- Castro Village Wine Co. has been featured in several local and national media sources including San Francisco Bay Times, Wine Enthusiast, Hoodline, SFist, Bay Area Reporter and San Francisco Food Lover's Guide. In 2012, Former Mayor Edwin Lee signed a proclamation declaring May 12, 2012 Castro Village Wine Company Day.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Castro Village Wine Co. is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Castro Village Wine Co. qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Tradition as an LGBTQ+-owned small business.
- Tradition as a specialty wine shop.
- Wide selection of California wines.
- Vintage corkscrew window display.
- Window displays promoting social causes.
- Welcoming and inclusive environment.

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CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Wine store.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Castro Village Wine Co. currently located at 4121 19th St. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

March 27, 2023

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Castro Village Wine Co., currently located at 4121 19th St.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on March 27, 2023, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Castro Village Wine Co. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Castro Village Wine Co.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Tradition as an LGBTQ+-owned small business.
- Tradition as a specialty wine shop.
- Wide selection of California wines.
- Vintage corkscrew window display.
- Window displays promoting social causes.
- Welcoming and inclusive environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Castro Village Wine Co. on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Wine store.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on March 27, 2023.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2022-23-035
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Nomination Date: January 25, 2023
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?
☒ Yes ☐ No

4121 19th St. from 1980 to Present (43 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?
☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?
☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: February 15, 2023

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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RAFAEL MANDELMAN

January 25, 2023

Re: Nomination of Castro Village Wine Co. to the Legacy Business Registry

Dear Director Tang,

I am writing to nominate Castro Village Wine Co. (CVWC) to the Legacy Business Registry. CVWC has sold fine California wines in an inclusive and welcoming space for over 40 years at 4121 19th Street.

CVWC first opened its doors in 1980, after co-founder Boyd Swartz decided to leave his downtown job to spend more time in the Castro community he calls home, motivated by the assassination of Harvey Milk and a desire to live openly as a gay man.

The store flourished under Boyd and partner Joe Chavez's leadership for the next 30 years, becoming a beloved part of the neighborhood and the go-to spot for wine in the Castro. CVWC's exceptional selection of California wines even earned Joe and Boyd several accolades within the wine industry.

While Boyd decided to retire in 2011, long time employee Joseph Estrada took over as wine buyer and store manager, ensuring continuity for the countless Castro residents who had come to know and love this neighborhood institution. CVWC remains a gay owned and operated neighborhood store with an outstanding selection of California wines.

Given CVWC's enduring presence in the Castro and their commitment to providing quality wines while supporting their community, I strongly believe that they would benefit from being a part of San Francisco's Legacy Business Registry, and I want to thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RfM".

Rafael Mandelman
Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Castro Village Wine Co.

Business owner name(s): Matt Porta

Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business

Current business address: 4121 19th Street

Telephone: (415) 864 – 4411

Email: info@castrowine.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.castrowine.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/castrowine

Twitter: @castrowine

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 4 5 7 6 0 4

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)

Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

☐ Immigrant-Owned Business

☐ Owned by Person with a Disability

☒ LGBTQ+-Owned Business

☐ Veteran-Owned Business

☐ Minority-Owned Business*

☐ Woman-Owned Business

**Minority is defined as on or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Matt Porta

Contact person title: Owner/Manager

Contact telephone: () –

Contact email:

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 4121 19th Street Zip Code: 94114

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N): Y

Dates at this location: From: 1980 To: Current

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other Address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

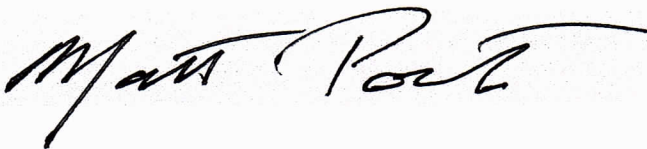
In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Matt Porta

Signature:



Date: 12/22/2022

CASTRO VILLAGE WINE CO.

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Castro Village Wine Co. is a boutique wine store specializing in fine California wines and providing an inclusive and welcoming space to anyone curious about wine from the Castro neighborhood and beyond.

The store carries blockbuster reds from Napa Valley, small production hidden gems from Sonoma, exciting blends from Paso Robles, and great new offerings from up-and-coming wine makers across California. Whether you're exploring wine for the first time or you're an enthusiastic collector, you will love Castro Village Wine Co.

b. Describe who the business serves.

The business has been part of the Castro community since 1980. The store has a loyal customer base of wine lovers from the Castro neighborhood and across the city. Over the years, many customers have moved away but still return to the Castro to visit the store. They provide friendly, unintimidating wine education to those interested in exploring California wine. Their California wine selection is known within the industry to be among the best in the city.

c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

A California wine boutique.

CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

The Castro Village Wine Co. ("CVWC") was founded in 1980 in its present location of 4121 19th Street.

The CVWC origin story is part of the formation of the LGBTQ+ Castro community. The founders of the business were Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez. They were part of original lavender wave that created the Castro community.

Boyd and Joe each came to San Francisco in the 1960s seeking freer lives as gay men. They met in the Castro in 1969 and started dating. Boyd was an attorney with the federal government and Joe was a contractor. They loved San Francisco's Victorians and started buying old, neglected buildings in the neighborhood and fixing them up. They purchased the lovely

Victorian retail building on Castro and 19th streets in the mid-1970s from the family that originally built it in 1904. At the time, the building was very run down; Boyd and Joe spent the next 40 years restoring it to its original glory.

In 1978, Harvey Milk was assassinated. This was a crushing blow to the Castro community and to Boyd and Joe. The assassination caused Boyd to decide to leave his downtown job, where he had to remain closeted. He wanted to spend more time in his Castro community where he could live openly as a gay man. They had a vacant storefront in their Victorian building, so when he quit his downtown job he began to think about how he could use the space to enhance the Castro community.

Boyd loved wine. His favorite wine store was Kermit Lynch in Berkeley. He discussed the idea of opening a boutique, neighborhood wine store with Kermit, who thought it was a wonderful idea and advised him to give the store a clear wine focus. Boyd thought the focus of his wine store should reflect the community. The Castro LGBTQ+ residents were building a new community, so rather than looking back to the old world of European wines, he decided to look forward to the new world of wine and specialize in California wines. CVWC was one of the first stores in San Francisco to specialize in California wines.

Finally, what to call the new store? It had been just a year since Harvey Milk's assassination. Boyd decided to name the store using the same brand that Harvey has used for his Merchant Society and named the store the Castro Village Wine Company.

The store flourished under Boyd and Joe's leadership for the next 30 years. It became a beloved part of the neighborhood and recognized within the wine industry as having an outstanding selection of California wine. Boyd was clear from the outset that inclusion was a core value of the store, insisting staff to personally welcome everyone that walked through the doors.

In 2011, Boyd finally decided it was time to retirement. This caused a mild panic among his loyal customers. A few of these customers got together and offered to buy the store and continue it under the same model. Matt Porta and James Kelm, operating as Castro Wine Ventures LLP, took over ownership of the store. Joseph Estrada, who had worked at the store for several years, took over store operations as the wine buyer and store manager.

Castro Village Wine Co. remains today a gay-owned and -operated neighborhood store with an industry recognized, outstanding selection of California wines.

b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

1980 to 2011: Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez

2011 to Present: Matt Porta and James Kelm operating as Castro Wine Ventures LLP

c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.

The business has been in continuous operation in the same location since 1980. During this COVID-19 pandemic, CVWC continued to serve customers via curbside pickup. Each week, they

emailed out a link to their current wine selections, usually with some recommendations. Customers could call or email in requests, or CVWC staff could chat over the phone and help customers find the perfect wine.

CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.

Castro Village Wine Co. was one of the first wine boutiques to focus exclusively on California wines in San Francisco. The store has grown up with the California wine industry. Today, they remain focused on providing their customers fine California wine from small producers, and they are recognized within the wine industry as having an outstanding California wine selection.

CVWC strives to know their individual customer's tastes, provide an exceptional selection of fine California wines, help their customers learn more about California wines, and support their customers in selecting the right wine for every occasion.

Castro Village Wine Co. is proud to be part of the LGBTQ+ community. They have been continuously LGBTQ+-owned since the business was established in 1980, and they have a long alumni list of LGBTQ+ employees.

b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?

Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez were active members of the Castro community since the late 1960s. They and their store were part of the lavender wave that created the LGBTQ+ Castro Community in the 1970s and '80s. The store is one of the oldest LGBT-owned businesses in the neighborhood. Boyd passed away in 2016; Joe is still very active in the community. He regularly checks-in with the other merchants in the neighborhood and stops by the Castro Village Wine Co. daily to ensure we are maintaining the quality that Boyd and he established.

Friday evening wine tastings are a neighborhood institution with a strong following of a cross-section of the Castro community.

c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Castro Village Wine Co. supports community in many ways including the following:

- Donating to various community organizations and schools including Frameline.
- Being a source of knowledge on California fine wines – especially small producers.
- Being a beloved meeting place for neighborhood wine enthusiasts.
- Using the storefront window to communicate/celebrate various community activities include Harvey Milk's birthday, Pride, voting, and supporting women's rights.
- Being a member of the Castro Merchants Association.
- Being an out and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community.

- Improving diversity in the industry by offering first jobs, mentorship, and development to women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ folks interested in wine and spirits.
- Offering over 180 different California wines across all styles, regions, and prices.

d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?

Castro Village Wine Co. has been referenced in the media numerous times. Following are some key listings:

- ***Shop Local in the Castro for the Holidays and Beyond***
San Francisco Bay Times
December 1, 2022
<https://sfbaytimes.com/shop-local-in-the-castro-for-the-holidays-and-beyond/>
- ***The Best Neighborhood Wine Shops Across the U.S.***
By Alicia Kennedy
Wine Enthusiast
October 22, 2019
<https://www.winemag.com/2019/10/22/the-best-neighborhood-wine-shops-across-the-u-s/>
- ***Meet Castro Village Wine Co., A Neighborhood Staple Since (1980)***
By Aaron Backmann
Hoodline
February 27, 2016
<https://hoodline.com/2016/02/meet-the-castro-village-wine-co-a-neighborhood-staple-since-1978/>
- ***The 11 Best Wine Stores in San Francisco***
By Jay Barmann
SFist
September 23, 2015
https://sfist.com/2015/09/23/the_11_best_wine_stores_in_san_fran/
- ***Business Briefs: Celebrating small businesses***
By Raymond Flournoy
Bay Area Reporter
May 9, 2012
<https://www.ebar.com/story.php?ch=news&sc=&id=242530>
- ***San Francisco Food Lover's Guide***
By Patricia Unterman
Second Edition, 2007
ISBN 1580089623

e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?

CVWC received a proclamation from the City and Country of San Francisco signed by Mayor Edwin Lee declaring May 12, 2012, as Castro Village Wine Company Day.

f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

Following would be some of the many negative effects to the neighborhood and city if Castro Village Wine Co. were to close:

- Another part of the Castro's LGBTQ+ history would be gone.
- Another quality retail experience in the Castro would be gone.
- A beloved neighborhood meeting place would be gone.
- A place to learn about California's fine wines in the city would be gone.
- A place to find wines from smaller California producers in the city would be gone.
- A Castro retailer known for creative and fun window displays would be gone.
- Another small retail employer would be gone.
- More retail jobs in the Castro would be lost.

CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

Castro Village Wine Co. is in one of the nicest Victorian retail buildings in the Castro. Located at the corner of Castro and 19th streets, the Victorian was built in 1904 and lovingly restored by Boyd and Joe for over 40 years. The building houses five retail merchants on the ground floor. CVWC proudly has maintained much of the original look/feel of the Victoria store. In addition, they have a tradition of having some of the finest window displays in the Castro – ranging from the fun (displays of 100 vintage corkscrews) to the serious (protesting the SCOTUS decision to remove a women's right to choose). For many, the store is a source of pride in the neighborhood.

b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.

Castro Village Wine Co. is committed to providing the Castro neighborhood with a premier retail experience by providing their customers with an exceptional selection of fine California wines and a personal touch in helping them select the right wine for every occasion. The business seeks to provide a welcoming, inclusive environment to all those who are interested in learning more about small production California wine. CVWC hopes to continue to serve their customers as a proud LGBTQ+-owned small business.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

Digital transformation is changing both the wine industry and small neighborhood retail. People are increasingly purchasing wine online and direct from the wineries. Non-chain / formula retailers are struggling. Yet these neighborhood retailers have historically been the backbone of our communities. They often create the charm and community-focus of our neighborhoods. Castro Village Wine Co. hopes to continue to provide the Castro with a premier retail experience by personally knowing their customers' tastes, maintaining an exceptional selection of fine California wines, being a source of information about California wines, and helping their customers select the right wine for every occasion.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Wine and spirits store.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The property at 4105-4121 19th Street has a Planning Department Historic Resource Status of "A - Historic Resource Present." It is a contributing building to the Eligible Castro Street Historic District.













https://sfist.com/2015/09/23/the_11_best_wine_stores_in_san_fran/

SFIST

23 SEPTEMBER 2015 / [SF RESTAURANTS, FOOD & DRINK](#) / [JAY BARMANN](#)



A good wine store requires several things: broad selection, outside-the-box options, value, convenience, and knowledgeable, unpretentious staff. When it comes to wine, the quality and broadness of the selection might be subjective, but a well curated store with a staff that can guide you through it is a serious amenity in any neighborhood, because otherwise you're stuck with dusty, corked bottles from the corner store, or you're trawling through BevMo without a clue. Below, SFist's picks for the dozen best and best-loved wine shops around town, some of which even boast their own wine bars inside, for immediate tasting.



Photo: [Fran B./Yelp](#)

Castro Village Wine Co.

Tucked up on 19th Street away from a lot of the Castro foot traffic is this fantastic neighborhood wine shop has been around since 1978, specializing in small-production California wines and having been one of the first stores in the city to do so, it has established long and deep relationships with California wineries. There's always an interesting, rotating array of whites, reds, and rosés to look over, and there are plenty of bottles that clock in under \$20, making this place a far superior alternative to grabbing a cheap bottle from a corner market on the way home. But there are also plenty of higher end California reds to impress your next dinner party hosts, including a large selection of Pinot Noir. The staff and owners are also extremely attentive, knowledgeable, and friendly. Added bonuses: a small wine bar at the back that hosts weeknight and weekend tastings of all kinds, and a big selection of high-end bourbon, Cognac, and other booze.

Jay Barmann
4121 19th Street near Castro



Meet The Castro Village Wine Co., A Neighborhood Staple Since 1978



Photos: Aaron Bachmann/Hoodline

By [Aaron Bachmann](#) - Published on February 27, 2016.
[San FranciscoCastro](#)

Just off the beaten path of 19th and Castro streets lies a little neighborhood gem that many may easily overlook.

The [Castro Village Wine Company](#) has been a neighborhood staple since 1978. Founded in the late 1970s by partners Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez, it was originally part of a project to restore Victorian buildings in what was then termed the “gay ghetto.”

“It was really kind of a slum,” Chavez said of the wine shop's 1904 building, which was in a dilapidated state. “Little by little, we cleaned it up.” Chavez worked to restore many of the other buildings in the Eureka Valley, and after Swartz retired, he wanted to continue working. Together the couple decided to follow a passion of theirs, and open a wine shop.

At the time, the Eureka Valley Merchant's Association was not accepting of LGBT-owned businesses. In response, Harvey Milk founded the Castro Village Merchant's Association, and Swartz and Chavez decided to name their shop for the new nomenclature.



Boyd Swartz at the shop in the early 1980s. (Photo: via Joe Chavez)

The block of 19th and Castro has seen many businesses come and go over the years, Chavez told us. A travel agency, doctors' offices, and even a coroner have called the block home. "The only establishment that was originally here was the cleaner's. The wine shop brought people to the other establishments. [It became] a one-stop shop," remembers Chavez.

Swartz's vision for the shop was to focus on local California wines and feature smaller artisan wineries, both of which it still does today. The emphasis on proximity and fostering community offered an elegant alternative to the other bars and restaurants the neighborhood had to offer.

Key to cultivating the store's sense of community was Joseph Estrada, the former wine-tasting bar manager and current wine buyer and store manager. From 2004 to 2011, Estrada built a social framework in which both seasoned wine aficionados and those new to the world of wine could stop by for a glass and feel a sense of camaraderie, without fear of judgment.

In late 2010, Swartz and Chavez were ready to retire a second time, and decided to sell the business. Even though they were inundated with offers, the pair were cautious about who they would consider. They feared the wine shop would not retain its community ambiance, or worse, close altogether.



Boyd Swartz at the shop in the late 1990s. (Photo via Joe Chavez)

Three loyal customers, determined not to let that happen, decided to come together and purchase the wine shop and keep it in the community. “Boyd would say, we made the right decision,” Chavez says.

In 2011, the Castro Wine Village Co. officially changed ownership, but with the same emphasis on local wines and neighborly character.



The shop underwent a facelift. New hardwood floors, updated shelving, and a handmade tasting table were all added, and Estrada was promoted to store manager and wine buyer. He faced the challenge of remaining true to the wine shop's unpretentious culture, but also keeping up with skyrocketing rents in the Castro and the ever-changing industry.

Estrada decided to keep the focus on California wine, bringing in lesser known wineries and ambitiously seeking out some of the more exclusive heavy hitters. “I really wanted to see the shop stay current, without giving into trends,” he said. Since becoming the wine buyer, Estrada has brought in renowned accounts from Arnot-Roberts Wines, Peay Vineyards (“a winery that doesn’t always sell to retail”), Matthiasson Wines, and Anthill Farms.

Estrada also leveraged his connections in the wine industry to start hosting special events at the shop. In 2012, The Castro Village Wine Co. hosted a wine tasting event with Robert Craig Winery, a pioneer of Napa Valley mountain vineyards. Cathy Corison, the 2011 *Chronicle* winemaker of the year, has poured her famed Cabernets at the shop, as has another winner of the same award (in 2014), Steve Matthiasson. The shop even hosted a signing event for wine critic Jon Bonné’s book *The New California Wine*.



Joseph Estrada.

The wine-tasting bar offers unique weekend flights, often thematic in nature, or wines by the glass. The creative seasonal window displays draw visitors in for a glass of wine and lively conversation with the regulars.

While the landscape of Castro business retail has changed dramatically in recent years, The Castro Village Wine Co. remains a constant in the neighborhood. Some of the faces have changed over the years, but the communal atmosphere and focus on showcasing California wines persists.

The shop's next wine event is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13th, 2016, and will feature Jasmine Hirsch, general manager and social media marketer for Hirsch Vineyards.

Proclamation

City and County of San Francisco

WHEREAS, the City and County of San Francisco traditionally recognizes notable community businesses, and the historic, dedicated work of Castro Village Wine Company has truly represented San Francisco values at their best; and

WHEREAS, the premises of the Castro Village Wine Company have continuously been occupied by local retail since being constructed following the San Francisco Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906; the building was family-owned until being transferred to the founding owners of the Castro Village Wine Company in 1980, and it has never been leased to chain or formula retail establishments; and

WHEREAS, the Castro Village Wine Company is located half a block from the site of Harvey Milk's camera store, a half-block from Rikki Streicher field, one block from the legendary Castro Theatre, three blocks from Nobby Clarke's Mansion, five blocks from the Seward Street Slides and six blocks from the geographical center of San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the Castro Village Wine Company was founded as part of the historical creation of the diverse Castro neighborhood in 1980; since then, the business has tirelessly and continuously sought out new and hard-to-find wines to serve residents of the Castro district for over 32 years; and

WHEREAS, the Castro Village Wine Company continues to exclusively sell wine produced in California and has encouraged education, conversation, debate, camaraderie and neighborhood community at its tasting bar for 572 weekends since 1980; and

WHEREAS, our City takes great pride in being home to tens of thousands of small businesses that make up our diverse small business community and the backbone of San Francisco's economy; the Castro Village Wine Company was recently sold from one local-area owner to another local, loyal customer and proud San Franciscan, and today we celebrate its grand reopening; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Edwin M. Lee, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby proclaim May 12, 2012 as...

CASTRO VILLAGE WINE COMPANY DAY

in San Francisco!



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin M. Lee".

Edwin M. Lee
Mayor



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: MARCH 15, 2023

Filing Date: February 15, 2023
Case No.: 2023-001580LBR
Business Name: Castro Village Wine Co.
Business Address: 4121 19th St
Zoning: NCD – Castro Sreet Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 2696 / 001
Applicant: Matt Porta
4121 19th St
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Tolu Atoyebi – (628) 652 -7363
sydney.atoyebi@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Castro Village Wine Company (CVWC) is a small, boutique wine shop in the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood specializing in the sale of fine California wines. The business was founded in 1980 by partners, Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez, who sought to use the space to enrich the LGBTQ+ community in the Castro, which had recently been devastated by the 1978 assassination of Harvey Milk. For Swartz and Chavez, the shops focus on the new, emerging world of California wines, instead of old-world of European wines, would reflect the new community the Castro's LGBTQ+ residents were building and be a symbol of looking forward.

As one of the first wine boutiques in San Francisco to focus exclusively on California wine, the store has grown alongside the wine industry in California over its 43 years. CVWC offers an eclectic assortment of California wines across all styles, regions, and prices, ranging from blockbuster reds from Napa Valley to exciting blends from Paso Robles to new offerings from small up-and-coming wine makers.

Additionally, as one of the oldest LGBT-owned businesses in the neighborhood, CVWC aims to provide an inclusive and welcoming space for anyone interested in wine and wine culture. In the store, residents and visitors, with varying levels of experience and exposure, can receive friendly, unintimidating wine education, attend wine tastings and commune with other patrons. CVWC also is committed to providing first jobs, mentorship, and development to women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ folks interested in wine and spirits.

Preceding Boyd's retirement in 2011, the business was purchased by loyal customers Matt Porta and James Kelm, operating as Castro Wine Ventures LLP. Today, CVWC is a member of the Castro Merchants Association, contributor to various community organizations and schools, and remains an out and proud member of the LGBTQ+ community.

The business's primary location at 4121 19th Street is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the southwest corner of Castro and 19th Streets in the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood. The property is within the Castro Street NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. It is also within the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District and within the California Register eligible Castro Street Historic District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1980.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Castro Village Wine Co. qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Castro Village Wine Co. has operated continuously in San Francisco for 43 years.
- b. Castro Village Wine Co. has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Castro Village Wine Co. is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the cultural tradition of wine and wine making.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. The property at 4121 19th Street is an example of the Classical Revival-style of architecture expressed in Eureka Valley from the 1900s to the 1920s. Constructed in 1904, the commercial building has one rounded bay and four square bays at the second floor with pilaster window surrounds. The façade has extensive Classical Revival roofline detailing including egg and dart molding, a modillion cornice, and a wide frieze with applied garland ornament.

The property at 4121 19th Street is also located within the California Register-Eligible Castro Street Historic District. The area surrounding the property consists primarily of two- and three-story mixed-use buildings (ground floor commercial with upper story residential flats) that were constructed during the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. The area exhibits a predominant 'Victorian-era' and "Edwardian-era" architectural character, and includes styles such as Italianate, Stick-Eastlake, Queen Anne, and Edwardian; and a few examples of Classical Revival, Art Deco, Mediterranean Revival, and 20th century Commercial. (Historic Resource Evaluation Response: Case No. 2013.0160E)

Additionally, founders Boyd Swartz and Joe Chavez were a part of the Lavender Wave that helped establish the LGBTQ+ Castro Community in the 1970s and 1980s.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes. The property is located within the California Register-Eligible Castro Street Historic District.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

The property at 4121 19th Street is listed in the Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement (Adopted in 2017) as an example of the Classical Revival style of architecture expressed in Eureka Valley from the 1900s to the 1920s.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Castro Village Wine Co. has been featured in several local and national media sources including San Francisco Bay Times, Wine Enthusiast, Hoodline, SFist, Bay Area Reporter and San Francisco Food Lover's Guide. In 2012, Former Mayor Edwin Lee signed a proclamation declaring May 12, 2012 Castro Village Wine Company Day.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 4121 19th Street (1980 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Tradition as an LGBTQ+-Owned Small Business
- Tradition as a Specialty Wine Shop
- Wide Selection of California Wines
- Vintage Corkscrew Window Display
- Window Displays Promoting Social Causes
- Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1321

HEARING DATE: MARCH 15, 2023

Case No.: 2023-001580LBR
Business Name: Castro Village Wine Co.
Business Address: 4121 19th Street
Zoning: NCD – Castro Sreet Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 2696 / 001
Applicant: Matt Porta
4121 19th Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Tolu Atoyebi – (628) 652 -7363
sydney.atoyebi@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CASTRO VILLAGE WINE CO. CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 4121 19TH ST., BLOCK/LOT 2696 / 001.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on March 15, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Castro Village Wine Co. qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Castro Village Wine Co.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

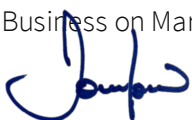
- 4121 19th Street (1980 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Tradition as an LGBTQ+-Owned Small Business
- Tradition as a Specialty Wine Shop
- Wide Selection of California Wines
- Vintage Corkscrew Window Display
- Window Displays Promoting Social Causes
- Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2023-001580LBR to the Office of Small Business on March 15, 2023.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Wright, Black, Foley, , Johns So, Nageswaran

NOES: None

ABSENT: Matsuda

ADOPTED: March 15, 2023