

# WATER 2 wine:

## Where Wine & Family Meet

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**Wine and family.** Those two simple things are the foundations of the micro-winery Water 2 Wine, located in New Braunfels, Texas. They are what owner Brandie Jewell and assistant manager Johnny Reinhart value most. Wine and family are simple. Easy. Comforting. And for the guests of Water 2 Wine, they can easily relate.

### FOR THE LOVE OF WINE

Jewell fell in love with wine on a backpacking trip through Europe. Sitting and relaxing at the outdoor cafés while sipping a glass of wine created a fire in her heart that still burns today. "You can't be in a hurry when you have a glass of wine in your hand," she said. "You just kind of have to sit down and relax, and so I was really drawn not only to all the magical qualities of wine but the whole lifestyle that surrounds it."

After a successful 20-year career in marketing and advertising, Jewell decided it was time to make a change. She and her husband relocated back to where her family is originally from, the Hill Country. Jewell's ancestors came over from Germany in 1854 and settled in Bulverde, about 20 miles from New Braunfels. "My Dad grew up here. He and his brothers and sisters didn't want to work the family farm, so my dad was the first generation to move away," she said. Even though she did not grow up in the Hill Country, memories of summers spent on the family farm made Comal County an obvious choice for a relocation and slower pace.

"Luckily for me," Jewell explained, "Another couple, Jerry and Kelly Rush, had started this winery, and they were actually looking to move on after eight years. So I came in and said, 'This sounds perfect,'" she said. "Quitting your job, quitting your career, taking the plunge to buy your own business. . . it's pretty scary, but it's pretty much the most fabulous thing I've ever done."



It has been two years since Jewell took over, and she would not have it any other way. She will tell you so herself if you sit down for a glass of wine, however, it really is not necessary. It is evident in every part of the winery, from the warm greetings to the little details tended to so thoughtfully, to the jovial interactions between employees. Guests can tell this is where Jewell truly belongs.



## THE DREAM TEAM

Together, Jewell and Reinhart are an absolute powerhouse. They feed off of each other's energy, and their warm and inviting personalities make guests feel like a part of the family. "I've never really worked for an employer where it's been such a comfortable level of both professionalism and a very family connection," Reinhart said.

Jewell also gives credit where credit is due. They lean on each other, and that relationship is very special to both of them. "Not only was Johnny here before me, I would have burned this place down if it was not for him," she said. "Seriously, when I started I had no idea. I'd worked in advertising. I had never worked behind a bar. I had never really worked in the restaurant business. I didn't know what I was doing."

It is their connection that turns a simple winery into a magnetic experience. Guests receive more than just a glass of wine; they also get friendly conversation with employees who genuinely care. Behind the scenes, this winery is a well-oiled machine. Everyone has a role, and each values their individual part. They all take pride in this little-hidden gem.

Jewell's mother even comes in once a week to help bottle wine. "We go through about 1,000 bottles every two weeks," Jewell explained. "She is just a machine. She will get down into our cellar and just bottle straight all day long. It's absolutely wonderful."

## HOW IT WORKS

In the basement of the historic building built in 1924 is where all the cool stuff happens. Downstairs, several dozen barrels of wine ferment. The grapes are shipped from hand-selected vineyards all over the world. After they have been pressed at the vineyards, the juice is shipped to Water 2 Wine and the fun begins. The juice is then transferred into barrels and about six weeks later, the wine is ready.

The unique part about Water 2 Wine is that it is a micro-winery, meaning they only create small batches. Each barrel only yields about 28 bottles. It is cleanly crafted with low sulfites and few histamines, yielding a smoother flavor with less of an alcoholic taste.

The winery caters to its guests with different events such as live music, wine memberships, and bingo. Wine-O Bingo happens once a month and has been such a hot event that guests must now purchase tickets in advance. Proceeds go to a local charity such as Bras for a Cause and New Braunfels Humane Society. Jewell strongly believes that the winery should contribute to and be an active part of their community.

Memberships come in three levels with three different prices: Basic, Gold, and Platinum. Each one buys the member one to two complimentary glasses of wine per month and also two bottles; different levels include bottles from different price points. Details can be found online, or better yet, get the details in person with a glass of wine and a smile.

One of the most unique opportunities Water 2 Wine offers is for guests to make their own wine. The staff facilitates most of the wine making process and then guests, along with Reinhart's master artistic skills, create two custom labels. Once the wine is ready to go, guests can have a wine bottling party and invite their family and friends to help bottle, label, and cork their own small batch of wine. Each batch yields 28 to 29 bottles.

Additional events can be found online or by signing up for the winery newsletter. However, Water 2 Wine is still a top-notch place to sit at the bar or in a comfortable chair and enjoy a glass of wine. They have successfully created a calming, welcoming environment. Visit with friends or go alone. The staff will happily chat you up and share their wine knowledge and personal stories. "I really pride myself on this winery being a wonderful place for people to just sit down, slow down, relax, and spend quality time with their friends," Jewell said.

Maybe it is the ambiance; the warm, inviting, and comfortable atmosphere is the perfect setting for wine enjoyment with friends. Maybe it is the undeniable chemistry among the employees, with their smiling faces and willingness to not only share wine knowledge but pieces of their hearts too. Or maybe it is just simply the magic of wine. But whatever draws guests to New Braunfels and this micro-winery, it is something truly special. Every guest at Water 2 Wine becomes family after that very first sip.

*In loving memory of my dad, Ken Javor, who helped me discover many hidden gems, including this winery.*