Vineyards with wine tourism: A heady mix for hospitality biz

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Bengaluru, 22 December

Boutique resorts and hotels in vineyards of Nashik, Pune, and pockets of Karnataka are seeing an uptick propelled by domestic tourism, improving wine quality and supportive policy incentives.

While India may arguably still be some distance away from pegging itself next to a Napa Valley, Tuscany, or the Barossa Valley, wine majors like Sula, Vallone, and Fratelli are attracting visitors in thousands each year as room tariffs range between ₹10,000 and ₹75,000 a night.

"Wine tourism is incomplete without accommodation. Once the wine business stabilised, the natural progression was to build experiences around it, and stay is the most critical part of that journey," said Monit Dhavale, head of hospitality at Sula Vineyards, which is headquartered in Mumbai and which operates some of the country's largest vineyards in Nashik and Domaine Sula in Bengaluru.

Sula opened the country's first vineyard tasting room in the late-1990s, followed by amphitheatres, restaurants, and festivals. The wine producer's first hospitality foray Beyond by Sula opened in 2008, followed by The Source at Sula, with 12 rooms and has since expanded to 67 rooms. Recently, it has launched a third hospitality property in Nashik—The Haven by Sula, a new 50 boutique rooms.

Hospitality contributes about 7-8 per cent of the company's total turnover while wine tourism overall accounts for nearly 20 per cent, according to Dhavale. "We average around 80 per cent annual occupancy, with peak months such as December touching 95 per cent," Dhavale said. Average room rates are around ₹10,000, rising to ₹15,000 during festive seasons.

Globally, popular wine regions in the US, France, or Australia derive a significant share of their revenues from hospitality rather than wine sales alone, said Ashwin Rodrigues, outgoing secretary of the Wine Growers Association of India (WineGAI). Indian producers are now seeking to adapt to a similar playbook.

"Wine-themed hospitality commands a premium of 10-30 per cent over non-themed resorts," said Rodrigues. "The experience such as vineyard walks, tastings, and food pairings, makes it visually appealing, experiential, and aspirational," he added.

Nashik, India's largest wine hub, despite its prominence, remains underpenetrated. It has fewer than 200 rooms across just three winery resorts, according to WineGAI. To add, government incentives are adding momentum. Maharashtra's tourism policy offers 15-20 per cent capex subsidies, and seven-year goods and services tax (GST) refunds for wine tourism projects. However, the rise of vineyard hotels is leading to monetisation year-round through rooms, restaurants, weddings, and corporate offsites.

Hotel Irada in Pune Wine Country — a 66-acre estate built directly over a working winery, a 90-minute drive from Pune — is the country's first Design Hotel by Marriott. The property has been reimagined from what was once Vijay Mallya's country wine estate.

Room tariffs range from ₹25,000 to ₹75,000 per night, with guest numbers for wine experiences. "We focus on curated, immersive wine experiences rather than volume tastings," said Craig W Wedge, estate manager of Hotel Manager, adding that the property typically hosts around 40 guests for the Irada wine experience over a weekend.

The estate has currently replanted all its vineyards, with its next wine vintage expected in January 2027, highlighting how hospitality revenues can help sustain the long gestation cycles inherent in wine production.

Vallonne Vineyards, near Igatpuri, operates a four-room boutique hotel, and plans to add 12-15 rooms. "We realised visitors from Mumbai wanted to linger over meals, enjoy tastings, and stay the night. Hospitality currently contributes about 30 per cent of our portfolio, and we expect that to rise to nearly 50 per cent by 2027-28 (FY28)," said Aditi Pai, director, Vallonne Vineyards.

Vallonne receives 12,000-15,000 visitors annually, with growing international footfall during harvest and festive seasons.

Located in Maharashtra's Solapur region, Fratelli Estate, owned by Fratelli Wines, operates a four-room property for exclusive bookings where each room, starting around ₹10,000, features large glass windows that open out to sweeping views of the surrounding vineyards.

Building on its wine tourism, Fratelli Vineyards is developing a separate, high-end 40-room resort within its 200-acre estate, which is scheduled to become operational in the second half of 2026. The expansion reflects the company's move to capitalise on the rising demand for experiential travel and wine-led hospitality.


The Source by Sula Vineyard, Nashik

Sip, savour, unwind

- Sula, Vallone, and Fratelli draw thousands with premium stays
- Room tariffs range between ₹10,000 and ₹75,000 a night
- Hospitality contributes about 7-8% of Sula Vineyards' total turnover, while wine tourism accounts for nearly 20%
- Vallonne Vineyards receives 12,000-15,000 visitors annually
- Fratelli Vineyards is developing a separate, high-end 40-room resort, which will open in 2026
- Nashik, India's largest wine hub, remains underpenetrated despite its prominence

Regional foods continue to rule breakfast tables

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New Delhi, 22 December

Even as the Indian packaged food market goes through a protein revolution, and gut-friendly products like Greek yoghurt gain favour, when it comes to breakfast, a large number of urban Indians are still choosing the traditional dishes over western items.

iD Fresh Food started selling rice batter for *dosa* and *idli* in 2005, identifying a white space in the packaged food market. In the 20 years since, the brand has grown to a revenue of ₹681.38 crore in 2024-25 (FY25) while recording a net profit of ₹50.75 crore in the same period.

"Over the last two years, we have witnessed double-digit growth, supported by both an increase in household penetration and higher consumption among existing consumers. The category has benefited from a steady influx of new users," Rajat Diwakar, chief executive officer (CEO) India at iD Fresh Food told *Business Standard*.

According to a recent FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) pulse report by market researcher Worldpanel by Numerator (formerly Kantar Worldpanel), ready-to-cook (RTC) mixes is among the two categories to double its volumes in the last two years, adding 18 million new households during the period.

"Primarily driven by batters and mixes that are ready to be cooked, the category is a high potential one for the next decade," the report stated.

A deep sense of familiarity and emotional connection have powered this growth, Diwakar pointed out. But beyond nostalgia, "these foods are typically prepared fresh and are inherently more wholesome compared to many heavily processed breakfast alternatives. Staples like *idli*, *dosa*, and *upma* are nutritionally balanced, comforting and flavourful, making them a natural choice and relevant across generations," he added.

Meanwhile, products like cornflakes have witnessed dwindling volumes. According to the researcher, cornflakes have witnessed about 14 per cent volume loss in the last two years. Muesli, oats, and porridge (MOP) have seen growth in excess of 1.5 times in the same time, but batter sales still outweigh these premium options.

For AWL Agri Business Limited, poha sales saw a double-digit year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth in FY25, underpinned by strong sales across both general trade and alternative channels, the company said, adding that the product's retail penetration grew by 40 per cent Y-o-Y in FY25.

Orkla India, which owns and operates brands like MTR Foods and Eastern Spices and listed on the bourses earlier this year, too, has witnessed growth on the back of sustained interest in the Indian RTC/ready-to-eat (RTE) category.

The company is working to transform convenience foods in line with consumer needs, and is especially looking to build the breakfast segment with innovations like RTC chilled *dosa* batter, *upma*, and *puttu* batter.

"In breakfast, we have extended the traditional powder range that we had to a fresh, ready-to-use batter, which has been in the market for the last two years. For Eastern, we have extended it from batter, which has been in the market for the last two years. For Eastern, we have extended it from anything between two hours and eight hours to make. We have got five-minute versions now," Sanjay Sharma, managing director (MD) and CEO at Orkla India told investors while announcing the company's September quarter results.

Meanwhile, under the MTR "three-minute range", it also sells a variety of poha to cater to regional tastes and local consumption habits.

"The Indian breakfast category takes up more shelf space, and is a larger category than other breakfast-related items," Anuj Singh, CEO, Spencer's Retail, told *Business Standard* on the sidelines of the recently held CII IndiaEdge 2025 conclave.

According to Deloitte's August report titled "Spotting India's prime innovation moment", the RTC segment volume doubled over 2022-24 (58 per cent growth in 2024) as consumers bought instant *dosa* batters, gravy/pasta mixes and meal kits for speed, yet preferred to "finish cooking at home".

"We definitely see more people picking up packets of *poha*, and instant variants of *upma*, *pongal*, and even *parathas*. Sales have remained steady when it comes to Indian options, and sales of rice batters have grown. In comparison, sales of western breakfast items like muesli or granola have fallen massively," said the sales head at a prominent grocery chain based in Delhi-NCR.

On the table

- Ready-to-cook mixes among the two categories have doubled the volumes in the last two years
- Products like cornflakes have witnessed dwindling volumes
- For AWL Agri Business Limited, *poha* sales saw a double-digit year-on-year growth in FY25
- Orkla India looking to build the breakfast segment with innovations like RTC chilled *dosa* batter, *upma*, and *puttu* batter

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Oppo to launch Reno 15 Pro Mini

Oppo has confirmed plans to launch three smartphones under its upcoming Reno 15 series in India. The lineup will include a compact Pro Mini variant, featuring a 6.32-inch Amoled display and weighing 187g.

Asus unveils new Copilot+ AiO PC

Asus has launched a new all-in-one PC called the Asus VM670KA. Powered by an AMD Ryzen AI 7 350 processor, the system offers AI-driven features exclusive to Copilot+ PCs.