

There's a buzz in Walla Walla as Seattle investors buy Abeja vineyards and inn

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

May 1, 2018, 7:29am PDT Updated: May 1, 2018, 8:14am PDT

Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality has announced a new management and operating agreement with the upscale Inn at Abeja and Abeja vineyards, a 38-acre property in Walla Walla.

The inn and vineyards were sold Friday to a limited liability company that includes Columbia Hospitality CEO and founder John Oppenheimer, who is the majority owner, Arnie Prentice of Seattle insurance brokerage USI Kibble & Prentice and Ken and Ginger Harrison, who founded Abeja in 2000. Prentice is a longtime patron of the inn.

In a simultaneous transaction, the Harrisons brought on new partners to the continued operations of the Abeja winery business, including Prentice. Veteran winemakers Daniel Wampfler and Amy Alvarez-Wampfler will continue to lead winemaking operations at Abeja, and the Harrisons will be actively involved in overseeing the winery and tasting room. All onsite team members will be retained, including longtime innkeeper Mary Besbris.

Terms were not disclosed and public recordings did not list a price.

The mergers and acquisitions firm METIS served as the adviser on both transactions.

Columbia Hospitality is a hotel and resort management company whose portfolio includes nearly two dozen properties across the West. Most are in Washington state, including the Heathman Hotel in Kirkland, the Inn at Langley on Whidbey Island and the Salish Lodge & Spa at Snoqualmie Falls. In recent months, the company has added properties in downtown Seattle and on the Everett waterfront.

"The Inn at Abeja and vineyards are the ideal additions to our expanding collection of unique properties," Oppenheimer said in a news release.

Located seven miles east of downtown Walla Walla, Abeja is in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. The original buildings of the century-old farmstead have been restored as cottages and suites, which rent for between \$359 and \$699 a night, according to the inn's website. The farmhouse rents for \$1,750 a night.

Abeja in Spanish means bee.



COLUMBIA HOSPITALITY

The Inn at Abeja has been sold to Seattle investors, including Columbia Hospitality CEO John Oppenheimer.

Marc Stiles

Staff Writer

Puget Sound Business Journal



Columbia Hospitality, Arnie Prentice are the new owners of the Inn at Abeja. - Puget Sound Business Journal