

# Formosa Gardens

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## Formosa Gardens developer on the cusp of \$6M winery, botanical gardens off W192



A marketing image for Island Grove Wine Co. at Formosa Gardens, to be built on roughly 11 acres on the corner of Formosa Gardens Boulevard and Funie Steed Road in Osceola County.

Bob Moser, GrowthSpotter  
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Kissimmee-based developer George Chen should break ground within a few weeks on a \$6 million winery, botanical gardens and event space in partnership with Florida's [Island Grove Wine Company](#), an attraction he hopes oenophiles and nature-lovers will flock to while visiting the W192 tourism corridor.

Based on 11 acres on the northeast corner of Funie Steed Road and Formosa Gardens Boulevard, the property owned by Chen's family firm, **Formosa Developers, Inc.**, is just a few blocks south of his [Formosa Gardens Village](#) shopping center on W192. It also neighbors property for the future [Margaritavillage resort announced just a week ago](#).

Named **Island Grove Wine Co. at Formosa Gardens**, Chen's development plan for the project calls for \$6 million in estimated build-out costs, spread over three phases and five years. It's been in a slow-boil development for roughly the past five years, Chen said, but is now on the cusp of construction and a May-June 2016 opening.

"With this winery I'll have a better platform to organize many of the big, fun events I've always thought should be developed and promoted here to better establish Kissimmee

as an annual destination for fun," he said.

The winery development will be funded solely by equity from the two parties, a norm for Chen, who's maintained a low-leverage approach to residential and commercial development since his family started in the business in 1989, as partners with the Chinese government on the \$100 million-Splendid China park.

Underground utilities and infrastructure on the 11-acre site are in place. Considering costs related to business planning and feasibility studies, Chen estimates \$1.5 million has been invested thus far, pre-construction.

Roadways on the site are ready for paving, with general contractor [Chronus Construction](#) waiting for the winery's construction permit to be issued within the next few weeks in order to begin. Chen expects his next hire for the winery to be a sales and marketing director.

The winery building alone will cost an estimated \$2 million to build over the next nine months. Chen projects \$4 million will be invested overall by the property's grand opening.

Architect on the project is James A. Garritani, RA of [Keesee Associates](#), landscape designers are [My Yard Farm](#), and interior design is being done by [VOA Associates Inc.](#)

Island Grove Wine Company is a division of Island Grove Ag Products, one of the largest organic blueberry growers in Florida at more than 1 million pounds per year, with farms in Arcadia and Island Grove. The company produces more than 100,000 bottles of wine per year, along with a peach wine and varied grape wines that are mixed with other berries.

Chen has a college degree in biochemistry, and developed an interest over the past decade in Central Florida agriculture's future with new species of berries and peaches as replacement crops for citrus farmers.

He met the Island Grove Wine owners about six years ago at a Florida agriculture convention, when the company was in just its second year of wine making.

The Kissimmee winery building's design will be inspired by the Francis Ford Coppola Winery in Geyserville, Calif., where Chen said executives from Island Grove Wine visited within the past year for design cues.

The two-story building will boast more than 12,900 indoor square feet. Guests enter through a central door on the first floor to a large retail display, and begin their tour to the left in a small theater, with an introductory film about the property and wine-making process.

After exiting the theater, guests will pass through a glass-enclosed hallway to view the wine-making room on left (and future beer micro-brewery), and a laboratory space on right. Island Grove will produce blueberry Port or blueberry ice wine on site, Chen said.

They'll proceed to a private tasting bar with 20-30 seats, after that revisit the central retail space, and be free to explore the first floor's right side, which will have a main

wine tasting bar, and spaces serving fresh pastries, fresh juices, coffee and wine dispensing machines.

Beside the building to its north will be roughly two acres dedicated to planed vines of muscadine and cluster grapes, with a wine-tasting space with tables, fire pit and extensive trellis, Chen said.

The building's second floor will feature 3,000 square feet of event space that can be subdivided into three smaller rooms, which will be marketed for corporate meetings, wedding receptions and other gatherings.

The property's outdoor wedding venue, directly behind the winery building, will be landscaped in the shape of a giant heart, covering 7,250 square feet with 630 seats.

The outdoor botanical gardens will cover six acres of the property and be introduced in three phases. The first phase, to be ready before the May-June 2016 opening, will include all of the paved walking paths, a utility road around the property's side and rear, and a majority of the plants and fruit trees, which will require a two- to five-year time frame for their canopy to develop.

Featured fruits to be grown on the property, aside from two types of grapes, will include mangos, peaches, persimmons, a variety of berry bushes, longans and lychees, along with herb plants.

The second phase will include a large ceremonial event lawn that's surrounded by fruit-bearing trees and bushes that were planted in the first phase, along with a topiary garden.

The property's third phase will feature a hydroponics greenhouse, a farm-to-table culinary kitchen and serving area, and a vegetable garden.

***Editor's Note:*** This story was updated to correct the number of bottles of wine per year that Island Grove produces, and the total indoor square footage of the winery building.

*Have a tip about Central Florida development?*

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