

HOW MARTIN RAY WINERY AUTOMATED PALLETIZING TO IMPROVE BOTTLING EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE MANUAL LABOR



Industry
WINE PRODUCTION



Solution
**ROBOTIQ LEAN
PALLETIZING - PE20**



Location
**SONOMA COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA, USA**



Units
1



Company Profile
**HISTORIC CALIFORNIA WINERY
FOUNDED IN THE 1940S**



Key Result
**REDUCED MANUAL PALLETIZING
LABOR AND ACHIEVED AN EXPECTED
ROI WITHIN 18-24 MONTHS**

INTRODUCING MARTIN RAY

Founded in the 1940s, **Martin Ray Winery** is one of California's pioneers in premium single-vineyard wines. Located in Sonoma County, the winery operates from one of the region's oldest winery sites, blending historic winemaking traditions with modern production techniques.

Over the past two decades, the company has worked to modernize its facilities while preserving the character of its historic winery. Under the leadership of COO Bill Batchelor, Martin Ray continuously invests in technologies that improve efficiency and support long-term growth.

Today, the winery bottles wine **year-round, nearly five days a week**, operating a modern bottling line capable of handling multiple wine formats.

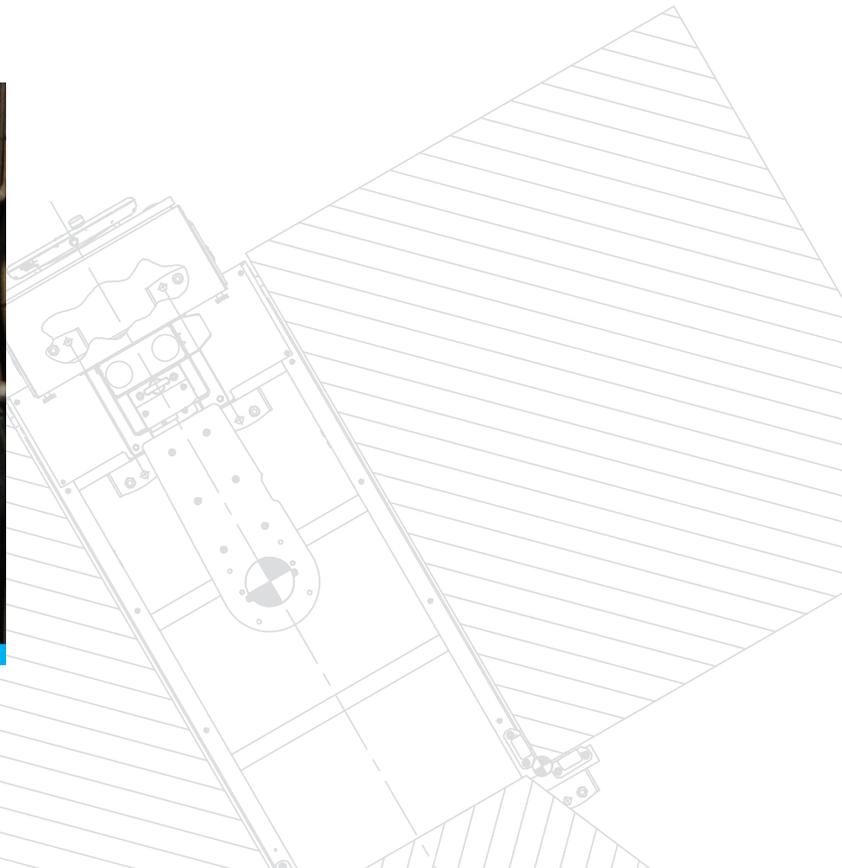
However, one key process remained manual: palletizing wine cases at the end of the bottling line.



Bill Batchelor
Chief Operations Officer, Martin Ray Winery

“ We’re always looking toward new technologies and new ways to improve the winemaking process and make things more efficient for the business. ”

— Bill Batchelor, Chief Operations Officer, Martin Ray Winery



THE CHALLENGE

As production grew, manual palletizing became a significant operational constraint.

At the end of the bottling line, employees were responsible for stacking heavy wine cases by hand throughout the day. While common in the wine industry, this approach presented several challenges.

Physically demanding work

Two employees were required to manually stack wine cases onto pallets for every bottling run.

Labor availability and rising costs

Hiring and maintaining labor has become increasingly difficult and expensive in California.

Injury risk

Repetitive lifting and stacking created ergonomic risks for workers.

Limited floor space

Traditional palletizing systems often require large gantry-style machinery that would not fit easily within the winery's existing production space.

Bill had been interested in robotics for years but struggled to find a palletizing solution that could handle heavy wine cases while fitting into the winery's limited floor space.

“We had two people stacking pallets all day long by hand. It’s tedious work and physically demanding.”

— Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery





LEAN PALLETIZING

THE SOLUTION

After discovering Robotiq through an industry webinar, Martin Ray began exploring collaborative robotic palletizing as a way to modernize its bottling operations.

Robotiq's palletizing solution quickly stood out.

Compact footprint

The system could be installed in nearly the same space used for manual palletizing, making it ideal for the winery's constrained bottling area.

Experience with wine applications

Robotiq had already deployed palletizing systems in wineries and distilleries in Europe, giving Martin Ray confidence the system could handle heavy wine cases and demanding production speeds.

During the project, Martin Ray introduced an additional challenge.

Unlike many wineries, the company **does not palletize onto wooden pallets.** Instead, cases are stacked directly on the floor and moved using a clamp lift.

Robotiq's engineering team adapted the system to accommodate this unique workflow.

"It was the first time they had done that, but their team came back with a solution within a week."

— **Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery**

Throughout the design process, Martin Ray and Robotiq worked closely together, holding weekly meetings to refine the solution and ensure seamless integration with the bottling line.

"Robotiq had experience with wineries already. Wine cases are heavy, and I needed to know the system could handle that."

— **Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery**





IMPLEMENTATION

Once installed, the Robotiq palletizing solution quickly became part of Martin Ray's daily operations.

Operators can easily change between different wine case formats using **recipe-based programming**. Each recipe requires only the box dimensions, weight, and palletizing pattern.

“The changeovers are very simple. You enter the box dimensions and weight, and the system handles the rest.”

— Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery

One of Bill's biggest concerns was whether the robot could keep up with the bottling line speed.

That concern was quickly resolved.

“One of my biggest worries was whether the robot could keep up with our line speed. That was proven false right out of the gate.”

— Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery

The system has proven highly reliable, requiring minimal maintenance and operating continuously throughout bottling runs.

TRANSFORMATION AND SUCCESS

The introduction of robotic palletizing has delivered immediate operational benefits for Martin Ray Winery.

Reduced manual labor

The winery has already reduced labor requirements on the bottling line by more than one position, with further optimization expected as the team becomes more comfortable with the system.

Workforce development

Instead of eliminating jobs, employees were reassigned to higher-value roles such as machine operation, filtration, and quality control.

“The goal wasn’t to eliminate jobs. It was to eliminate manual labor and allow our team to grow their skills.”

— **Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery**

Reliable production

The robotic palletizer works continuously without fatigue, helping maintain consistent bottling operations.

Fast return on investment

Martin Ray expects to achieve a **full return on investment within 18 to 24 months.**

Innovation showcase

The robotic palletizer has also become a highlight of winery tours for distributors and partners.

“When people visit the winery, we show them the robot as part of the tour. It shows that we’re looking toward the future.”

— **Bill Batchelor, COO, Martin Ray Winery**

By integrating collaborative robotics into its bottling operations, Martin Ray has successfully combined **historic winemaking tradition with modern manufacturing innovation.**



Unlock greater potential with Robotiq’s Lean Palletizing and discover how automation can transform your operations.

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