

Tenuta Fondaluce in the United States - the chain question on one page

Prepared for the proprietor and the export director, Tenuta Fondaluce (fictional) · Prepared by Daley Brennan · August 2026

Illustrative sample. Tenuta Fondaluce is a fictional estate, figures are representative, and whole sections are deliberately blurred. A real Channel Strategy Assessment is complete, specific, and unblurred.

The question. Can Fondaluce sell through more US retail chains - the premium grocers, the natural-foods and wine-specialist chains, the national on-premise groups - and what would a high-volume US strategy take?

The structure. US law forbids your importer from invoicing a retailer. The US is not one market - it is a federation of 50 different, unique markets - so every chain listing is one national authorisation plus a separate wholesaler deal in each state, and paying for shelf space is illegal in alcohol - the legal substitute is per-case allowances funded by the supplier for as long as the listing lives. Velocity (bottles per store per week) decides whether a chain keeps you. The estate's own data proves what an unfunded listing produces: the national wine-specialist chain launched the 2020 flagship through its presale program, and July moved only 540 bottles across 72 stores.

The cost of the volume play. The benchmark - a Languedoc house's flagship rosé, the category's best modern build - took an estimated **\$70m over a dozen years** (spread \$40-110m). A Fondaluce version needs a new sub-\$8-FOB wine built on sourced bulk juice, because nothing the estate ships has an importer FOB under \$12. Modelled: **~\$20m committed over five years, ~\$8m peak funding, break-even in year six if it succeeds** - and at merely "decent" velocity, never. Most new chain brands fail, and failure ends in closeout at 20-70% off, under the estate's name.

The asymmetry. Money lost is recoverable; the pricing floor of a \$165 icon wine is not - the canonical cases, American and European, each took decades to recover, or never did. Your book is built around gatekeepers (a national steakhouse group, the fine-wine independents, the clubs), and grocery ubiquity is the opposite of their curation claim.

Recommendation - do not pursue the high-volume chain strategy. Compound what is working: eight markets in genuine growth YTD 2026 (\$140,000 inside a declining headline), a record California independents month when the winemaker was in market, and the luxury verticals now opening. Directional path: **~\$3.2m by 2029** at current-book margins.

What we pursue instead - the two wines that clear the maths (companion paper: *Solmora & Velamare - US chain strategy*). "Chain" here means premium grocery and the wine specialists - never the discount and club tier. The model is the premium UK specialist chain where Solmora already sits on shelf; it is not the club aisle.

	VELAMARE (\$12 FOB)	SOLMORA (\$25 FOB)
Channel	Premium off-premise	National on-premise
Sits at	\$25-28 SRP / \$21-23 promoted	\$90-120 lists / \$23-28 by the glass
Leads with	████████████████████	████████████████████
Year-one shape	30-50 stores, 500-1,300 six-bottle cases, \$36-94k	Group list + BTG programs, \$235-390k per group when both mature

Both run under six unbroken guardrails: the flagship never enters grocery; every listing funded per case by the estate from day one; price integrity designed in advance, with the key states in mind; the importer in the room for every negotiation (the Torretta lesson); allocation confirmed before commitment; velocity gates agreed with the buyer, and we exit before we are cut. Realistic incremental run-rate if the gates keep passing: **\$300-600k a year by end-2027**, funded in the low hundreds of thousands, compounding into the organic path rather than competing with it.

What we would ask of the estate:

risa macchia fondale colle rovere podere brezza pergola traccia misura torchio poggio corrente
torchio poggio corrente marea sasso terra angelo
arenaria vela vento tenuta lume golfo fiore borgo prova risa macchia fondale colle rovere podere

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