

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, TWELFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT, BROWN COUNTY

Meranda v. Meranda

2026-Ohio-221 · No. CA2025-05-009 · Decided January 26, 2026

SUMMARY

The Twelfth District Court of Appeals of Ohio affirmed a Brown County domestic-relations judgment in a divorce proceeding. The court held that the Ripley property remained the husband's separate property, with the wife entitled only to one-half of the mortgage reduction during the marriage, and upheld the award of the entire winery business to the husband based on the wife's financial misconduct and waste.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Twelfth Appellate District, Brown County
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Robin N. Piper; Robert A. Hendrickson; Melena S. Siebert
JURISDICTION	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Twelfth Appellate District, Brown County
DECIDED	January 26, 2026
DOCKET	CA2025-05-009
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Wife appealed the Brown County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division's divorce judgment and property-division determinations, asserting that the trial court improperly awarded Husband the Ripley property and the entire winery business.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Classification of property as marital or separate is reviewed under the manifest-weight-of-the-evidence standard; property division and the financial-misconduct determination are reviewed for abuse of discretion. Under the manifest-weight standard, the reviewing court considers the evidence and reasonable inferences, witness credibility, and whether the factfinder clearly lost its way and created a manifest miscarriage of justice.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Ohio Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Maura L. Meranda v. Seth A. Meranda

TOPICS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by awarding Husband the Ripley property after finding that Wife failed to establish a marital interest in the property beyond one-half of the mortgage principal reduction.
2. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by finding that Wife committed financial misconduct and by awarding Husband the entire winery business as compensation.

HOLDINGS

1. The trial court properly classified the Ripley property as Husband's separate property and properly denied Wife an interest in the property beyond one-half of the mortgage reduction because Wife failed to prove that her labor, monetary, or in-kind contributions caused an increase in the property's value.
2. The trial court did not abuse its discretion in finding that Wife committed financial misconduct by preventing Husband from operating and maintaining the winery, failing to arrange care for the property and equipment, failing to provide a full accounting, and diverting business funds, and in awarding Husband the entire winery business as compensation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“unambiguously mandates that when either spouse makes a labor, money, or an in-kind contribution that causes an increase in the value of separate property, that increase in value is deemed marital property.” (¶ 15)

“clearly lost its way and created such a manifest miscarriage of justice that the [judgment] must be reversed and a new trial ordered.” (¶ 21)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Husband owned the Ripley property and winery before marrying Wife in 2013, and Wife was never added to the deed. During the marriage, Wife contributed labor and money to the household and winery, but the evidence did not establish that her contributions increased the property's value or that proceeds from the sale of her Michigan home were traceable to improvements. After Wife obtained a civil protection order and prevented Husband from accessing the winery, equipment was damaged, wine was spoiled or missing, and grapevines were destroyed; the trial court also found that Wife failed to account fully for winery sales and deposited business funds into personal accounts.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Husband filed for divorce on October 31, 2023, and Wife filed an answer and counterclaim. After a three-day final hearing, a magistrate ordered the Ripley property sold and the remaining proceeds divided equally. The trial court partially sustained Husband's objections, awarded him the Ripley property subject to Wife's one-half share of mortgage principal reduction, and awarded him the entire winery business as compensation for Wife's financial misconduct. The appellate court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Smith v. Smith, 2023-Ohio-982 (12th Dist.)
- Patterson v. Patterson, 2006-Ohio-1786 (12th Dist.)
- Kohus v. Kohus, 2003-Ohio-2551 (12th Dist.)
- Bozhenov v. Pivovarova, 2023-Ohio-2437
- Middendorf v. Middendorf, 82 Ohio St.3d 397 (1998)
- Harrington v. Harrington, 2008-Ohio-6888 (4th Dist.)
- Smith v. Smith, 2008-Ohio-799 (10th Dist.)
- Robinson v. Robinson, 2013-Ohio-435 (12th Dist.)
- Garcia v. Samano, 2019-Ohio-3223 (12th Dist.)
- Taub v. Taub, 2009-Ohio-2762 (10th Dist.)
- Irvin v. Eichenberger, 2020-Ohio-4962 (10th Dist.)
- State v. Young, 2021-Ohio-2541, fn. 7 (12th Dist.)
- State v. Wilson, 2019-Ohio-338, ¶ 27 (12th Dist.)
- State v. Baker, 2024-Ohio-2856, ¶ 53 (12th Dist.)