



THE NAPA VALLEY WINE ESTATE
ESTABLISHED 1885

**DEDICATED TO EXCEPTIONAL WINEMAKING,
FAR NIENTE PAIRS
HOUSE STYLE, VINEYARD OWNERSHIP
AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
TO CREATE AN ENDURING BLEND**

Oakville, CA – Far Niente Estate Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are consistently recognized as benchmark Napa Valley wines in every vintage. A dedication to winemaking in its highest form, paired with a focus on house style, vineyard ownership and social responsibility, has established Far Niente as one of the world’s great wine estates.

The precedent was set by Gil and Beth Nickel, who purchased the abandoned winery in 1979 and developed a plan for the historic site that had suffered six decades of neglect. Drawing inspiration from the great European wine estates, the Nickels determined to produce just two wines – Chardonnay, which was introduced the same year they acquired Far Niente, and Cabernet Sauvignon, first produced in 1982. At the same time, the Nickels undertook a three-year restoration of the property, which earned the winery an appointment to the National Register of Historic Places and recognition as one of the most beautiful and exclusive locales in the Napa Valley.

The Nickels set out to build their dream team by hiring Dirk Hampson in 1982 to manage winemaking, and Larry Maguire in early 1983 to direct sales and marketing. Hampson and Maguire soon became partners in the winery and today serve as chairman, and president and CEO, respectively. In 2001, nephew Erik Nickel joined the fold, and in 2003, son Jeremy Nickel came on board. Beth Nickel, Erik Nickel and Jeremy Nickel, with Hampson and Maguire, today comprise the five owners of the winery.

Dedicated to Exceptional Winemaking

“Winemaking style is every bit as much what you choose not to do, as what you choose to do, and there are a number of things we’ve chosen not to do at Far Niente,” states Hampson. “On the other hand, we’ve chosen to produce only two wines.”

Such a limited production is somewhat rare among California wineries, but the Far Niente partners made the decision in the interest of achieving the highest quality wines possible. There are no other products to distract the winemaker's focus and potentially compromise quality.

“Our observation is there are a very limited number of wineries that are truly internationally famous for one product, and a tiny number recognized for two wines – we think we're one of them,” says Hampson.

This clear vision extends to all arms of the Far Niente business, including its three sister wineries. Dolce, introduced with the 1989 vintage, is the only North American winery devoted to producing a single, late harvest wine. Nickel & Nickel, founded in 1997, is centered on a vineyard-based philosophy and produces only small-lot, 100 percent varietal, single-vineyard wines. EnRoute, introduced in 2009, is focused on Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Each winery has its own winemaker and vineyards, but is linked through ownership.

Maguire points to the shared viewpoint of the owners as key to the winery's clarity of vision. “We didn't just meet and discover that we naturally share the same point of view. Our common vision has developed over traveling and tasting together, spending late nights around the dinner table, visiting some of the world's great producers, agreeing and disagreeing with each other. One of the facets that makes Far Niente so unique is that we've taken these shared experiences and shaped a world view of producing wine, not simply a parochial view,” says Maguire.

House Style

If there is one central theme that infuses the winemaking program at Far Niente, it is the concept of house style. In its essence, house style is the blend of the vineyards with the winery's personality and winemaking priorities, as expressed through the wines. Although the wines are different in each vintage, a thread of similarity ties them together.

“Ideally, all the vintages are kissing cousins. Even though each wine is unique because of its vintage, a vertical tasting would show a relationship and consistency among the wines,” says Hampson.

Far Niente Chardonnay is marked by classic proportions of structure, elegance, style and length. The absence of malolactic fermentation provides the Chardonnay with the ability to age gracefully for several years after release, which is unusual for California Chardonnay.

“We're not trying to impress with weight, sugar, excessive volume or over-use of ML or oak,” explains Hampson. “Our Chardonnay ends up being incredibly pleasing, or, if one chooses to look

deeper, it's incredibly complex and challenging.”

Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon has always been blended primarily from Oakville fruit, but at the completion of vineyard replanting due to phylloxera in 2001, the wine's designation was changed to Oakville Estate, requiring that the Cabernet be produced only from Oakville vineyards owned or controlled by the winery.

The result is classically structured Cabernets that are rich in flavor, complex and long, with supple tannins. Elegant and food friendly, the wines display cassis and blackberry notes along with spicy oak aromas that have become synonymous with the Far Niente house style.

Vineyard Ownership

At the root of the Far Niente philosophy of house style and dedication to quality are the 250 acres of Napa Valley vineyards in the winery's holdings, which allow for the production of estate bottled wines.

The Martin Stelling Vineyard was acquired as part of the winery purchase agreement in 1979. Stelling Vineyard is one of the most famous sites for growing exceptional Cabernet Sauvignon in Oakville, and it is the cornerstone of Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon. Situated along the base of the western hills, this 100-acre vineyard was first planted in the late 1970s. Year after year, Stelling Vineyard grows classically elegant Cabernets with beautiful structure and complexity.

The Sullenger Vineyard in Oakville, which is home to the Nickel & Nickel winery, also contributes to the blend.

Far Niente Chardonnay is a blend of superlative Napa Valley vineyards, many of which are located in a little-known area called Coombsville, a cool growing region nestled in the rolling countryside and protected by the hills east of the city of Napa. Coombsville offers the characteristic climate of Carneros, with less wind, along with deeper, well-drained gravelly loam and volcanic ash soils.

Social Responsibility

Spring 2008 witnessed the transition of Far Niente's historic winery from relying on conventional energy, to 100 percent self-powering the estate with solar power. The solar energy is produced by the winery's revolutionary “Floatovoltaic™” system, which floats nearly 1000 panels on the Martin Stelling Vineyard's irrigation pond, the first-ever technology of its kind in the solar industry.

This revolutionary use of solar technology made headlines around the world and a Google search yields more than 6100 results referencing Far Niente's Floatovoltaic installation.

The conversion to solar is part of the collective movement by Far Niente and its sister wineries toward an integrated program enabling the production of wines through sustainable measures affecting vineyard, winery and day-to-day business practices. While solar is the centerpiece, complementary practices include sustainable and organic farming, powering farming vehicles with biodiesel fuels, recycling, the use of hybrid company vehicles and other environmentally responsible measures.

“We will always be committed first and foremost to producing great wines; it's what we've been doing for over 25 years,” said Maguire. “Yet, we recognize that our environment is facing significant challenges, and as an agriculture-based business we have an obligation to do our part and take sustainable measures where possible.”

Foundation for the Future

2010 marked the 125th anniversary of Far Niente, and the current owners are only the second people to make wine at the historic estate. The owners credit much of their success to focusing on producing just two wines at the best possible level, tuning out the clutter and trends that phase in and out of the wine industry, and resolute attention to detail. Continued refinement is key.

“Ultimately, for the greatest wineries, the concept of estate is fundamental to house style, generational longevity and success,” comments Hampson. “All of that is implied with what we're trying to achieve.”

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