

Five Generations That *Love*
the Journey of Winemaking.

WENTE VINEYARDS

“No one else in the world has vines like we have, that come from 100 years ago and are still here today,” says Karl D. Wente, winemaker at Wente Vineyards.

He’s talking about the Wente Heritage Selection Vineyard, which holds direct descendants of Chardonnay vines brought from France and planted by his great-grandfather a century ago.

But that comment about “no one else...” also describes the deep roots of his family. Karl is part of the fifth generation of Wentes making wine in California’s Livermore Valley.



The oldest continuously operated family-owned winery in the United States, Wente Vineyards was founded by C.H. Wente, a German immigrant who studied winemaking under Charles Krug in the Napa Valley. In 1883, he purchased 47 acres in a booming area for premium California wines—Livermore Valley, east of San Francisco.

“Work made life sweet,” said C.H. Wente, who passed on his love of growing grapes to his children. That passion still resonates with family members who run every aspect of the business. When the Wentes recently talked about the theme that inspired and united their five generations, their common thread was “Love of the Journey.”



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—Carolyn Wente

“It reflects a pursuit of quality and excellence that we want to continue for generations,” says Carolyn Wente, CEO of Wente Vineyards and part of the fourth generation. “But it’s not just about the destination, it’s about our passion for the process. We don’t make wine because we have to; we do it because we love to.”

An important part of family tradition includes generations teaching generations. “My grandfather and dad were always driving my brothers and me around the vineyard,” Carolyn Wente recalls. “They’d tell



us about the vines, the pests, soil, everything. While we were learning, it was always fun.”

Karl had similar experiences as a kid. “Even when I was really little, on most weekend mornings we’d get on a horse and go help. Actually, it was pretty cool. I remember feeling proud I was part of a winery with a long history.”

Today Wente Vineyards produces 100% estate-grown and certified sustainable wines from the Livermore Valley and Arroyo Seco in Monterey. “We have a family legacy of innovation and accomplishment,” Karl says. “An estimated 80% of California Chardonnays comes from the Wente clone—those cuttings planted in 1912.”

The Wente family strives to share the wine-country experience with others. In 1966, the family opened one of the first winery tasting rooms in California. “When people come to the Livermore Valley and see the beauty and the diversity of the terroirs and climates, they get that sense of place... what Wente Vineyards is all about,” Karl explains.

At the estate, the new Winemakers Studio features everything from black-glass blind tastings to blend-your-own-wine sessions. Set in a scenic natural amphitheater, the annual summer concert series headlines top performers. Designed by Greg Norman, the 18-hole championship golf course hosts major PGA tour events. The Restaurant—which showcases produce from the estate’s organic garden—celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2016.

As fifth-generation Wente winemaker, Karl strives to make each vintage even better than the previous one. “Our soil and climate here in the Livermore Valley are perfect for growing grapes,” he notes. “That’s why my great-great-grandfather chose this property—because he knew he could make great wines here. That’s my journey too.”

Five Generations of Winemaking

