

A Culture of Fine Wine:
Rooted in Family, Inspired by Community

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NEWSLETTER

ABOVE IMAGE: CHATEAU MONTELENA

MEET CHATEAU MONTELENA!

Q&A with CEO Bo Barrett and Winemaker Matthew Crafton

In January, we announced our new partnership with the Barrett family, and what a busy couple months it's been! Bo, Matt, and the entire Montelena family welcomed our team to their historic Calistoga estate, where we tasted their age-worthy Chardonnays and Cabernet Sauvignons over dinner, including an absolutely standout bottle of 1996 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon.

And then this month, we returned the favor by hosting Bo and Matt on a jam-packed **Chateau Montelena National Launch Tour**, where we were able to share these incredible wines with our trade friends in New York, Miami, Dallas, and Chicago!

The accomplishments of the Barrett family in developing Chateau Montelena into one of Napa Valley's premier estates is nothing short of remarkable. To welcome Chateau Montelena to the WD family and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Judgement of Paris, we caught up with Bo and Matt to reflect on the past five decades and look ahead to what's in store for the next 50 years.

Q&A with Bo Barrett:

It's been 50 years since the 1976 Judgment of Paris, in which Chateau Montelena's 1973 Chardonnay achieved the highest recognition from not only its peers but also the greater wine world. What does this historic anniversary mean to you and your family?

Fifty years ago, the Judgment of Paris became a watershed moment not just for Montelena, but for American wine. It challenged long-held assumptions about where great wine could come from and gave this country a new sense of confidence on the world stage. For our family, though, it was never about proving someone wrong. It was about proving that belief in this land, and a commitment to doing things the right way could stand up anywhere.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we view it not as a conclusion, but as a continuation. What began as conviction has evolved into one of the most collected and enduring expressions of American wine, celebrated for its longevity, integrity, and ability to reward patience across generations. The real impact of 1976 is that it opened doors, not just for us, but for Napa Valley and for American producers everywhere. Our responsibility now is to make sure the next fifty years are worthy of that moment.

Part of Montelena's ethos is to "question everything — convention, past methodologies, or how to do something just a little bit better." How have you put this ethos into practice over the last 50 years?

To us, questioning everything means not doing something just because it's always been done that way. We're always looking at our farming, winemaking, and decisions and asking if there's a better way to do it. Sometimes that means trying something new. Sometimes it means pulling back and letting the vineyard do more of the talking. We've never chased trends or made decisions based on what might get us attention in the short term. The focus has always been the same: if something can be improved, even incrementally, we owe it to the land and to the people who collect our wines to pursue it.

Your leadership in petitioning to gain federal AVA designation for Calistoga shows a clear respect for the land. How does that perspective guide where you're taking Montelena next?

When we pushed for Calistoga to become its own AVA, I wrote the petition myself. It wasn't about politics or recognition. It was about protecting what makes Calistoga distinct. That deserved to be acknowledged and preserved.

For me, it's pretty simple. This isn't just where we work, it's part of our family's life. My grandchildren run through these vineyards just as my children and I did when we were younger. It's that perspective which makes you think differently about every decision you make. We've always farmed responsibly, long before sustainability became a buzzword. Not because it sounded good, but because if you plan to be here for generations, you take care of the land. We want to leave this estate in better shape than we found it. Everything we do, from how we farm to how we replant, is about stewardship. We want to protect this place so that 30, 40, 50 years from now, it's still capable of producing great wine.



Bo Barrett, CEO

Q&A with Matt Crafton:

The Chateau Montelena Estate is one of Napa Valley's most unique growing sites, capable of producing world-class Cabernet Sauvignon. Can you tell us a bit about what makes this property so special?

The great vineyards of the world have an uncanny ability to express site, soil, and season in a way that can't be replicated anywhere else. The Montelena Estate Vineyard does this exceedingly well. It's a combination of the unique mesoclimate of where we grow coupled with the precision viticulture we practice on top of the alluvial and volcanic soils that fuse and mingle in a very small, localized area. As we wrap up the largest replant of the Estate Vineyard since 1972, we've spent the better part of a decade focusing on how we can continue to deliver that expression but in new and exciting ways; how we can take advantage of what this special piece of ground offers and decode that into our wines.

Recently you've been re-planting the estate, and you also acquired 73 acres that will serve as a future home of your Chardonnay. Can you share the motivation behind these initiatives?

Our focus has and always will be on the long-term. Trends come and go. The industry expands and contracts. But our attention is directed toward a better understanding and a more focused expression of our sites. This intense scrutiny necessitates making big decisions (and bets) that have multi-decade impacts on the future of the winery. Sometimes that focus takes the form of a targeted — albeit splashy — acquisition such as the recent purchase of the site for our future Montelena Estate Chardonnay vineyard; but behind the scenes most of it occurs through the continuous compounding of successive, small decisions that grow and magnify over time. Those are rarely headline grabbing — new row orientations, new rootstocks, new pruning and training methods — but over time, these decisions have massive effects on the quality of the wine we make.

Regarding the new Chardonnay site, specifically, we began the development process in early 2025, and the first vines will be planted this spring (2026). It's a complete redevelopment project from top to bottom and it might have been too big of an endeavor for some — but we recognized the potential and how it fit into the long-term vision for the brand. That's what gets us excited: the potential and the opportunity to make it happen.

You have invested in the future of Chateau Montelena through water conservation, embracing conscious farming, pioneering modern technology, and converting the entire estate to solar power. How are sustainability advancements at the winery and in the vineyard paving the way for a new era of winemaking?

Winemaking itself hasn't fundamentally changed since the Romans — we just have better tools and a better understanding in the modern era. The Barretts have long recognized that our two most important assets are our people and our vineyards. We want both to thrive so we invest accordingly. Investments in our vineyard increase the quality of our wines and the health of our vines. Our investments in sustainability fulfill our mission of being good stewards of our land. Our investments in technology allow our people to do what they do best: make good decisions. All of these work together toward ensuring a sustainable future for the brand.

In your 10 years running the Montelena winemaking program, have you implemented any changes to the house style and how do you see the style evolving in the future?

I don't really think Montelena has a house style. There are very few (if any) stylistic checkpoints or bumpers that we have to be aware of. If you look at the history of winemakers and winemaking at Montelena, all of us have had our own point of view; the hand of man is an important component of terroir. But all of us have recognized the opportunity and potential to craft site-driven wines that age beautifully over time. If there is any mandate, it's that. But it's one that I believe in; it presents us with the opportunity to create something undeniably exceptional every year, which is a very high bar. We just have to execute.



Matt Crafton, President & Winemaker



What are you most looking forward to in your new appointment as President of Montelena?

It happened very quickly and I'm only a few months in — so stay tuned. But, to be sure, I'm very optimistic and excited about the future of Chateau Montelena. I really believe that even after 50+ years, we're just getting started and that the investments we're making today will elevate the brand and deliver even better wines to our customers in years to come. Given my background in winemaking where it's easy to get excited about a wine that will eventually make it to market a full decade from now, I'm looking forward to giving my team the tools they need to succeed today — including our new partnership with Wilson Daniels — in addition to the direction we need to be successful in the future. I'm honored and blessed to follow in the footsteps of Jim and Bo Barrett. I don't take the responsibility lightly.

OUR FIRST CHATEAU MONTELENA VINTAGE OFFERING

Napa Valley Chardonnay 2023 and 2018 Library Release; Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2022; and Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 and 2011 Library Release

Napa Valley Chardonnay 2023

With vineyards situated in the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley, the gravelly, alluvial Loam soils produce wines that are the best of the New World: structure, acidity, and grace with modern ripeness and texture. To solidify the legacy of their legendary Chardonnay, the Barrett family purchased 73 acres in Carneros last year:

"The 2023 vintage will be remembered as one of the best in the last decade. Overall, it was an outstanding growing season where the mild conditions prevailed, capping an exceptional vintage," shares Winemaker Matt Crafton.

Characteristic of a cool vintage, bright citrus marries racy acidity in this elevated Chardonnay. These notes will dominate for the next few years, grounded by the weighty, textured mouthfeel for a spectacular and ageable wine.

Napa Valley Chardonnay Half-Decade Library Release 2018

Matt shares, *"Paradoxically, the 'easy' or 'straightforward' vintages can be the most difficult for me as a winemaker, and 2018 certainly qualifies in that it would have been tantalizingly easy to fall into the rut of recipe-driven, pre-processed. So thus, our objective became how to highlight subtlety; how to tactfully magnify the shades of flavor that are so easily obscured by the abundant sunshine. It's a unique mindset in that we actively search for and embrace the challenge."*

With this 2018 Half-Decade Library Release, lemon curd and ripe orange burst on the palate folding into stone fruit with acidity to carry you to a finish of orange marmalade, toasted almond, and clove.



Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2022

With the majority of the fruit grown on the Montelena Estate and the remainder in the well-drained Calistoga and Oak Knoll District soil, the Montelena Cabernet Sauvignon captures a broad expression of Napa Valley. The Cabernet Sauvignon is made to be both modern in style, fruit-forward, approachable in its youth and ageable for 15 to 20 years.

The 2022 vintage shows powerful character: Sudden intense heat at the beginning of September disrupted an otherwise standard growing season, yielding a concentrated wine. Intense black fruit, and supple tannins are elevated by minerality and acidity. The finish persists with cola, graphite, and black cherry.

Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021

Representing the purest expression of the Montelena Estate Vineyard, the 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon is recognized as a benchmark classically styled, ageable Cabernet Sauvignon. Matt says, *"A vintage is nothing short of effectively conveying the sense of this special place we farm, connected to each and every nuance of the growing season, in a way that lays the foundation for that wine to grow and evolve over time. Simply put, great wines build connections and great vintages endure."*

Characterized by limited soil moisture as the vines awoke from dormancy and extreme heat in the approach to harvest, the 2021 growing season produced fruit of extreme concentration and texture. Showing an elegant opening with youthful, bright fruit and dense tannins, this bottle rewards patience and time.

Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Decade Library Release 2011

Characterized by a cool growing season, the 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon soars with aromatic elegance. Red fruit, florals, and baking spices swirl in the glass. Rich minerality on the palate and silky, fine tannins frame the texture of the wine with bright acidity from start to finish.



COMING SOON!
New Brunello Releases

The highly anticipated annual vintage releases from our three esteemed Brunello di Montalcino producers are coming next month! **Biondi-Santi** releases its 2020 Brunello, a warmer vintage characterized by bright fruit and approachable structure. The Gaja family debuts their **Pieve Santa Restituta** Brunello 2021, a vintage heralded for its return to classicism; and **Val di Suga** introduces two single vineyard 2021 Brunellos—**Vigna del Lago** and **Poggio al Granchio**—as well as a 2020 vintage release of **Vigna Spuntali** Riserva, a south-facing vineyard characterized by its sandy soils. Stay tuned for more in our **Spring Luxury Offering!**

