



THE NAPA VALLEY WINE ESTATE
ESTABLISHED 1885



FAR NIENTE: ONE OF THE NAPA VALLEY'S ORIGINAL 19th CENTURY STONE WINERIES

Producer of possibly the oldest bottle of California wine

Far Niente, renowned for its production of estate bottled Napa Valley Chardonnay, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon, was one of Napa Valley's original stone wineries at the time of its construction in the late 19th century. Today, more than 125 years, the winery stands as a stunning example of the region's early winemaking heritage.

Far Niente was founded in 1885 by John Benson, an original forty-niner of the California gold rush and uncle of the artist Winslow Homer. Benson hired architect Hamden McIntyre, creator of the former Christian Brothers winery (now the Culinary Institute of America) and the Gustav Niebaum winery (today's Inglenook winery), to design the building. Constructed against a hillside in western Oakville, Far Niente functioned as a gravity flow winery, gently moving the grapes through each stage of production. Benson named the winery "Far Niente," taken from the Italian phrase "Dolce Far Niente," meaning, "sweet to do nothing." Far Niente prospered until its abandonment in 1919 with the onset of Prohibition, and was left untouched for sixty years until 1979, when Gil and Beth Nickel purchased the property and began a three-year renovation, restoring the winery to its original 19th century grandeur.

Nineteen eighty-two marked the return of winemaking to Far Niente, with the harvest of the winery's first Cabernet Sauvignon. Chardonnay was also produced at the winery for the first time that year. Although Far Niente produced Chardonnay in 1979, 1980 and 1981, the wines were made at a warehouse in Sausalito. Today, the winery continues to focus on producing only the two varietal wines, with a Napa Valley Chardonnay, a Napa Valley Cabernet and an Oakville Estate Cabernet.



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Far Niente Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are widely recognized by critics, the trade and collectors as being among the most consistently excellent wines produced in every vintage. An uncluttered vision of excellence, paired with a focus on “house style,” vineyard ownership and sustainability, is largely responsible for the winery’s continued success as one of the world’s great wine-producing estates.

Founded

1885

Winemaker

Andrew Delos (Director of Winemaking)

Nicole Marchesi

Current Releases

2019 Far Niente Estate Bottled Chardonnay, Napa Valley

2018 Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

2018 Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

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California’s oldest bottle of wine

Far Niente’s past and present were reunited in 1998, when a bottle of Far Niente Sweet Muscat, vintage 1886, was discovered in a private cellar in Marin County. The bottle exhibits the original label, cork and capsule, and is believed to be the oldest intact bottle of California wine in existence today.

The label, featuring a sepia-tone line drawing of a hammock overflowing with grape clusters, is thought to have been designed by Benson’s nephew, the artist Winslow Homer. Historians of the artist compare the style of the hammock on the label to the same technique employed in Homer’s other works but cannot provide authentication since the label is unsigned. Far Niente’s modern label design was created by artist Tom Rodrigues, with the introduction of the winery’s first vintages of Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.



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Gardens and Acacia Drive

The gardens and Acacia Drive at Far Niente are world renowned and play an important role in the re-establishment of the estate.

The Far Niente winery is surrounded by 13 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, thought by many to be among the most stunning landscapes in the Napa Valley. The highlight of the gardens are the thousands of southern azaleas that bloom every spring, carpeting the estate in brilliant hues of bright red and deep pink. It is said to be the largest single planting of this particular variety of azalea in California, and possibly throughout all of the west coast. At the height of bloom, colorful patches of azaleas are visible from a mile away on Highway 29.

The Nickels began developing the gardens in 1982, after the three-year restoration of the winery, each having come from family backgrounds in the nursery and landscaping business. Acacia Drive is the road leading to the winery gates. The gently curved allée, bordered on either side with more than 100 Autumn Gold ginkgo trees, offers serene views of the Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards of western Oakville. Acacia Drive ends at the Woodland Garden, near the winery gates. Groves of towering redwoods, acacias, dogwoods and century-old cork oak trees create an enclosed canopy around the gates and along the front driveway.

The historic stone winery emerges at the end of the drive through the Woodland Garden, lined with olive trees along the front drive and cloaked in colorful Virginia Creeper. The gardens surrounding the winery offer many intricate details. Delicate ferns and fragrant alyssum grow from the nooks between the stones in the retaining wall that supports the olive trees. The gardens are also home to a number of specimen trees, including Japanese maple, Japanese snowbell, lion's head maple, Chinese fringe and saucer magnolia.





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Tours and Tastings

Far Niente has always had at its core the philosophy of personalized, customizable service for its customers. Following current health and safety guidelines, Far Niente's normally offered tours and tastings have been temporarily replaced with safe outdoor and virtual private tastings. Both the current tasting options and normally available offerings are detailed below.

Current Offerings

Private Outdoor Tastings by Appointment:

Guests are able to experience the current release Napa Valley Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignons, alongside the extremely limited Cave Collection wines with the Cave Collection Library Tasting, or taste the newest vintages alongside hand-selected wines from the family of wineries during an Estate Tasting. All winery experiences are private, with limited, appointment-only seating. Tastings are available from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily. Every private Far Niente tasting is led by one of the professional wine hosts and is exclusive to the guests' party, with spacious outdoor seating set among 13 acres of lush gardens.

Private Live Video Tasting:

Far Niente is currently offering a private live video tasting experience. The virtual experience is customizable; a personally curated selection of wine is shipped to each person. Alternatively, virtual tastings can be set up for those guests who have Far Niente wines in their collection and would like to taste them. A time convenient to the guests is coordinated. During the live video experience, a winery host walks the guests through the tasting, and answers any questions. The virtual tastings are a way to both connect with the guests as well as educate.

Normal Offerings

Far Niente is normally open for tours and tastings to the public, by appointment, each day from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. In addition to a guided tour and tasting, the winery also offers two private tasting experiences. Tours include a walk through the historic tri-level winery, which is built into the surrounding hillside as well as a portion of the 40,000 square-foot Far Niente wine aging caves, which were the first modern wine caves built in North America when excavation began in 1980. Every tasting ends with a taste of Dolce, the sumptuous, late harvest wine produced by Far Niente's sister winery, also called Dolce.

Estate Tasting:

The 60-minute tasting-only experience includes a tasting of the newest vintages alongside hand-selected wines from our family of wineries during the Estate Tasting.



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Cave Collection Library Wine Tasting:

This special 60-minute tasting-only experience focuses on Far Niente's Library Wines, allowing guests to taste both the current release Napa Valley Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, alongside the beautifully aged and extremely limited Cave Collection wines.

Extended Estate Tasting:

Guests enjoy an intimate glimpse of our winery, gardens and wines during this 90-minute Extended Estate Tasting experience. Discover the stories behind the wines, wine caves and tri-level winery during this seated tasting of current release wines and end with a taste of the sumptuous late harvest wine produced by Far Niente's sister winery, Dolce.



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Winemaking



DEDICATED TO EXCEPTIONAL WINEMAKING, FAR NIENTE PAIRS HOUSE STYLE, VINEYARD OWNERSHIP AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TO CREATE AN ENDURING BLEND

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 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, he 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 building underwent a three-year restoration, 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.

Dirk Hampson joined the team in 1982 to manage winemaking, and Larry Maguire in early 1983 to direct sales and marketing. Today, the pair serve on the board as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively.



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Andrew Delos leads the winemaking team as Director of Winemaking, with Nicole Marchesi as Far Niente Winemaker.

Dedicated to Exceptional Winemaking

Such a limited production is somewhat rare among California wineries, but Far Niente's success is based on its focus on producing the highest quality wines possible. There are no other products to distract the winemaker's focus and potentially compromise quality.

This clear vision extends to all arms of the Far Niente business, including its four 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. Bella Union, unveiled in 2015, is devoted to producing Napa Valley Cabernet. Each winery has its own winemaker and vineyards, but is linked through ownership.

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.

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 Napa Valley Chardonnay.

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 Far Niente Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is the estate's heritage wine, reflecting its legacy of making high-quality, consistent Napa Cabernet. It was made until 2000; with the designation changed to Oakville Estate in 2001 and through 2016, Far Niente only produced the Oakville Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, the elegant, limited-production wine. In 2017, Far Niente decided to bring back the beloved Napa Valley Cabernet. With this heritage wine now back in the portfolio, Far Niente now offers both the highly-limited Oakville Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as the Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, two distinct luxury Cabernet offerings informed by more than 35 vintages of growing, making and enjoying Napa Valley Cabernet.



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Vineyard Ownership

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

The Martin 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 56-acre vineyard was first planted in the late 1970s. Year after year, Stelling Vineyard grows classically elegant Cabernets with beautiful structure and complexity.

Far Niente Chardonnay is a blend of superlative Napa Valley vineyards, many of which are located in 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.

Sustainable Leadership

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, large-scale, grid-connected solar installation in the world.

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, recycling and other environmentally responsible measures.



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Winemaker



NICOLE MARCHESI

A graduate of the Viticulture and Enology program at The University of California at Davis, Nicole Marchesi honed her skills in Sonoma and New Zealand before coming to Far Niente as an enologist in 2005. She was soon promoted to Assistant Winemaker, and four years later became the fourth Winemaker in Far Niente's 30-year history. During her tenure, Marchesi has gained a deep understanding of Far Niente's estate vineyards, working with the sites and individual blocks to bring forth the discrete character of each. Ultimately, Marchesi strives to create wines of elegance and depth that capture both place and vintage, while staying true to the Far Niente house style.



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Vineyards



ESTATE VINEYARD PROFILES

The Martin Stelling Vineyard (Oakville) – 56 acres

Far Niente's largest vineyard is located behind the winery against the western hills of Oakville. The vineyard is named for Martin Stelling, the previous owner of the land, who presided over what was reputed to be the largest fine wine vineyard in the world, comprising over 5000 acres in the Napa Valley. Unfortunately, Mr. Stelling died before he was able to make wine from his holdings, and today, the vineyard is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot on some of the most beautiful, gravelly loam soil in the Napa Valley. Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon is the only wine that has ever been produced from the Stelling Vineyard. The site borders other notable Oakville vineyards, including Martha's Vineyard, the Mondavi Reserve blocks, and Harlan Estate.



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John C. Sullenger Vineyard (Oakville) – 42 acres

Acquired in 1998, this Oakville vineyard is located on the east side of Highway 29, directly north of Opus One, and across the road from the Robert Mondavi To-Kalon vineyard. While this vineyard estate is the home of the Nickel & Nickel winery, it also supplies some of the fruit for the Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon. The vineyard produces wines with a delicate grace, structure and elegance typical of the area.

Barrow Lane Vineyard (Coombsville) – 18 acres

Barrow Lane is comprised of two wonderful parcels in a little-known area of the cooler, southern Napa Valley known as Coombsville. This 18-acre vineyard, located at the base of the hills east of the city of Napa, offers the characteristic climate of Carneros, with a few key differences. It enjoys the cool influence from the San Pablo Bay, but claims deeper, well-drained, volcanic soils and less wind. This gently sloping vineyard with its western exposure produces wines with a tight fruit structure.

John's Creek Vineyard (Coombsville) – 50 acres

Located less than a half-mile north of Barrow Lane Vineyard in Coombsville, on a slight incline at the base of the eastern hills, the 50-acre John's Creek Vineyard is key to the Far Niente Chardonnay blend. The deep, gravelly loam soil and the vineyard's southwestern exposure, account for the fruit ripening a full two weeks earlier than Barrow Lane. The resulting aromas and flavors add wonderful components of richness and subtle tropical fruit nuances that have long been associated with Far Niente Chardonnay.

Carpenter Vineyard (Coombsville) – 25 acres

Carpenter contributes Chardonnay to the Far Niente Chardonnay blend. The soils are composed of deep, volcanic, gravelly loam, with good drainage. Cool growing conditions, fog which hangs over the vineyard until midmorning, and a generally temperate climate allow for the grapes' slow ripening and long hang time. The growing conditions help to produce wines of wonderful depth and cool character.

Berlenbach Vineyard (Coombsville) – 17.5 acres

Located directly east of the Barrow Lane Vineyard in Coombsville, on a hillside with slopes ranging from 15 to 20% slope, the 17.5-acre Berlenbach Vineyard is an important and very different part of the Far Niente Chardonnay blend. The site has a western exposure that is comprised of predominantly volcanic and light soils that are well-drained, resulting in the smallest vines grown in any of Far Niente's vineyards in the appellation. As a young vineyard, it so far is one of the earliest ripening sites that offers the blend bright acidity, freshness, and incredible concentration.