



California's First Family Of Chardonnay

THE WENTE CLONE STORY

What is a clone?

In viticulture, a "clone" refers to vines descended from a single plant by taking a cutting or bud; in theory, each vine grown on a clone is genetically identical to the original vine. Clones are important and selected for favorable attributes, such as resistance to certain diseases or desired cluster size, taste, smell, etc. All clones are assigned a number or given a name to distinguish them from other clones. For example, Clone 2A is The Old Wente Clone, Clone 4 is the Wente Clone (also known as The Heat Treated Wente Clone).

IN 1912, while still a student at the University of California Davis, my great grandfather, second generation winemaker Ernest Wente, imported Chardonnay cuttings to California from France in order to explore the variety's potential in the soil of his native state. His early dedication resulted in the first varietally labeled Chardonnay in the nation, the Wente Bros. vintage of 1936, and initiated the most important lineage of grapevines in California wine – the Wente Clone.

Since that time much has changed – the United States has grown into a large and sophisticated wine market, and the Wente Clone of Chardonnay has become the most widely planted in

California. Of all California Chardonnay, roughly 80% is either a Wente clone or a derivative clone.

From our 47-acre beginning in Livermore Valley, California in 1883 up to the present, our family has been privileged to play a pivotal role in the exciting and challenging history of California wine.

After more than a century we are proud to continue our traditions of estate-grown fruit, certified sustainable

vineyards, and memorable wines. We look forward to continuing this legacy for generations to come.

Cheers,

KARL D. WENTE, FIFTH GENERATION WINEMAKER

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A Rich History

C.H. Wente came to America in the late 1800's from Hamburg Germany, learned to make wine from a German by the name of Charles Krug in the Napa Valley, and in 1883 established his first 47 acre Estate and Winery. He chose the Livermore Valley as it was famed for this excellent soils and climate.

1880

In 1880, Charles Wetmore persuaded the California Legislature to establish the State Viticultural Commission, and he became its first President and Chief Viticultural Officer.

1882

He subsequently founded the Cresta Blanca Winery in 1882 in the Livermore Valley. At that time, the California wine industry was suffering from a reputation of poor quality resulting from an over-planting of inferior grape varieties. Under the auspices of the Viticultural Commission, Wetmore traveled to Europe to acquire cuttings from the finest vineyards. Upon his return he made these selections available to fellow vintners throughout Northern California.



From Left: Eric (4th Generation), Ernest (2nd Generation), Karl (3rd Generation), and Phil (3rd Generation).

1912

While attending the University of California at Davis in 1912, Ernest Wenté, second generation winegrower, became interested in acquiring more Chardonnay vines to plant in the Wenté vineyard. He selected vines from the Gier Vineyard in Pleasanton and collected the rest directly from Montpellier Nursery in France. Ernest and his U.C. Davis professor, Leon Bonnet, convinced C.H. Wenté to order

a number of varieties from the nursery, among them Pinot Chardonnay and Ugni Blanc. These two sources formed the basis of what we now call the "Wenté" clone of Chardonnay.

1930

After the repeal of the National Prohibition Act (Volstead Act) in 1933, Herman and Ernest Wenté released the nation's first varietally-labeled Chardonnay, a 1936 vintage, from these early plantings.

1940s-50s

Over the succeeding years, Ernest continued to select and upgrade the Wenté planting, establishing a name as owner of the finest Chardonnay vineyard in California. Winegrowers throughout the state selected cuttings, now known as the pre-UC Davis "Old Wenté" clone, from this vineyard. Fred

"HERMAN AND ERNEST WENTE RELEASED THE NATION'S FIRST VARIETALLY LABELED CHARDONNAY, A 1936 VINTAGE"

and Eleanor McCrea were among the first to harvest wood for their new vineyard at Stony Hill in 1948. By this time Ernest Wenté had refined the variety through five or six generations of selections he made for replanting and vineyard expansion. Later, other wineries such as Martini and Hanzell took Wenté clone wood from the Stony Hill vineyard.

1970s

As late as 1960, State records show only 230 acres of Chardonnay in California; the Wenté plantings had grown to 70 acres by that date. The widespread popularity of

varietally-labeled Chardonnay wines, inspired in part by the success of the 1973 Chateau Montelena at the now famous "Judgment of Paris" tasting in 1976, spurred many new California plantings in the early 1980s. The most commonly planted clones were the UC Davis "Wenté" clones 4 & 5.



PRESENT

Over the past few decades, numerous renowned vineyards have continued Ernest Wenté's work in producing new selections of the Wenté clone. Larry Hyde has developed blocks he refers to as "Old" and "Young" Wenté clones. Many winemakers refer to the young versions (FPS 7244 through 7248) as the "Hyde-Wenté" selections. In addition to his own venture, Larry supplies Chardonnay to a pantheon of California winemakers who include Steve Kistler, David Ramey, and James Hall.

At Wenté Vineyards, we now grow 850 acres of Chardonnay in the Livermore Valley and Arroyo Seco appellations. Fifth Generation Winemaker, Karl D. Wenté, continues the family's legacy of Chardonnay with four different styles; Morning Fog Chardonnay, Riva Ranch Single Vineyard Chardonnay, Small Lot Eric's Chardonnay and The Nth Degree Chardonnay.

