

KEY ATTRIBUTES



HERITAGE

Pioneers in the Napa Valley, the Trefethen family are champions of estate grown wines. For three generations, they have carefully tended to their land, employees, and customers, building a loyal following for their legacy of fine, age-worthy wines with a deep integrity of place.

Embodied in their approach is a profound respect for both people and place. This extends beyond the boundary of their estate, knitting them into the fabric of Napa Valley. Over the past 50 years, they helped establish the Napa Valley Agricultural Preserve, co-founded the Napa Valley Grapegrowers, took on leading roles within the Napa Valley Vintners and California Wine Institute, led the effort to build the viticulture and winemaking centers at Napa Valley College, supported the same at UC Davis, hosted the Napa Valley Cooking Class, and established the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley AVA.

HISTORY

In 1968, when Eugene and Catherine Trefethen purchased farmland just north of the town of Napa, their property—like much of the valley at the time—contained orchards and hayfields in addition to vineyards. Demonstrating an uncanny vision for the future of the valley, they began to plant vineyards across the estate, focusing on the quality varietals that they enjoyed drinking, including Chardonnay, a varietal that was rather rare at the time.

The 1976 Trefethen Chardonnay was declared “The Best Chardonnay in the World” at the Gault & Millau’s Le Nouveau Guide’s Wine Olympics. John and Janet built on this early success, finding fans for other Trefethen wines—including Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Riesling, and Merlot—and their wider efforts played a pivotal role in turning the Napa Valley into the world-class wine and food region it is today.

LEGACY

In the mid-2000s, John and Janet’s two children—Hailey and Lorenzo Trefethen—became the third generation of the family to steward the estate. Steadfast in their family’s commitment to an ever-deepening knowledge of their legendary Oak Knoll District vineyards, Hailey and Lorenzo, along with CEO Jon Ruel, help lead a team that thoughtfully refines this approach. In 2020, both Hailey and Lorenzo welcomed the 4th generation of Trefethens: Hailey with a son named Angus, and Lorenzo with a daughter named Zora.

THE OKD

In 1994, Janet Trefethen spearheaded an alliance of neighboring winegrowers with sights on having the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley recognized as an American Viticultural Area (AVA) for its unique climate and 150-year history as a famed grape growing region. Finally, in 2004, the Oak Knoll District became Napa Valley’s 16th sub-appellation.

A long and mild growing season, coupled with soils that range from deep and fertile to rocky and dry, make the Oak Knoll District well suited for an incredible range of grapes varieties. Indeed, the OKD is the most grape diverse sub-appellation in Napa, allowing Trefethen to grow nine different varieties just within their own estate vineyards.



THE ESTATE

As their sole source of grapes, Trefethen's estate vineyards define their wines. Since 1968, they have been students of their land, and the more they learn, the more questions they have. Today, they farm at a level of detail that would have been unimaginable three generations ago.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Trefethen family considers their estate to be an integrated vineyard and winery ecosystem. When thinking of sustainability, they look at what will help them thrive for another three generations; how they can continue to farm the best quality grapes while sustaining their business and their land, all while enriching the lives of those that work there and those that enjoy their wines around the world. In recognition of their sustainability efforts, Trefethen was honored with the California Green Medal Environment Award in 2022. Here are some of their practices:

- 100% solar power and electric automobiles
- Year-round employment and benefits for farming team
- Recycle winery wastewater for irrigation
- Sustainable methods to remove weeds & prevent mildew—no harsh chemicals
- Practice deficit irrigation and dry farming techniques
- Harvest in early morning to save energy
- Compost all grape pomace (skins, seeds, stems) & return it to the vineyard
- Natural pest control—e.g., boxes for barn owls, bats, and bluebirds
- Cover crops to improve soil health and control water content
- Industry leader in sustainable agricultural innovation
- Multiple sustainability certifications for land and winery

RECOGNITION

Trefethen Chardonnay wins “Best in the World” in Gault & Millau's Le Nouveau Guide's Wine Olympics - not once but twice!

To try to prove that the 1976 Judgement of Paris was unjust, this French restaurant publication organized one of the largest wine tastings in history. Assembling representative wines from 33 countries, they held an “Olympiad du Vin”, in which France was expected to triumph. The judges were aghast when Napa Valley again emerged victorious. Trefethen's 1976 Chardonnay was declared “The Best Chardonnay in the World.”

The famed Drouhin family of Burgundy was aghast with this news and decided to host a rematch where Trefethen's 1976 Chardonnay won once more, beating Drouhin's Puligny-Montachet for first place. Finally convinced by the result, Robert Drouhin said Trefethen Chardonnay was “the yardstick by which all other Chardonnays must be measured.”

With over 50 vintages under their belt, there are far too many other accolades to list. Of recent note, the 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon finished in the top 1% of wines tasted at Decanter's 2022 World Wine Awards! In a field of over 18,000 wines judged by 41 Masters of Wine and 13 Master Sommeliers, this wine received Platinum and 97 points. It was the third vintage in a row to receive this prestigious honor from Decanter. Their 2020 Chardonnay was also awarded with a 91 point rating.

THE KITCHEN

In 1973, there were 45 wineries in Napa Valley led by pioneering families such as Mondavi, Chappellet, Davies (Schramsberg), May (Martha's Vineyard), Rhodes (Bella Oaks), and Trefethen.

Having no place to enjoy fine dining in Napa in the early years, these families created The Napa Valley Cooking Class. Over the years, highly acclaimed guest chefs, including Jeremiah Tower, Thomas Keller, and Wolfgang Puck were regular guest teachers. Michael Chiarello cooked for the group in the 1990s and returned to Trefethen 10 years later to film his acclaimed show “Easy Entertaining” for the Food Network. Janet also had special guests in her own home kitchen. In the 1990s, as a segment for Good Morning America, Janet cooked a Christmas dinner served with their beautiful Estate Chardonnay for Julia Child. Not an easy feat!

THE GARDEN

Trefethen's 3rd generation, Lorenzo and Hailey Trefethen, also share the family's passion for cooking. As early adopters and avid supporters of the “farm-to-table” movement, Hailey manages La Huerta, the family's sustainable vegetable garden located just steps away from The Villa. Containing over 100 edible varieties, it turns out over 17,000 pounds of produce each year, providing the raw ingredients for Winery Chef Chris Kennedy's exceptional wine pairings, as well as food for employees and their families.

