

Beckstoffer's buy into Carneros an Investment in the future

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A prime piece of Carneros real estate, planted to vines for well over two decades, has changed hands.

Developed by the Peter Mondavi family, owners of Charles Krug Winery, the former Cabral dairy pasture adjacent to San Pablo Bay has been purchased by Beckstoffer Vineyards for an undisclosed sum.

Andy Beckstoffer announced earlier in the week that his family-owned operation had purchased the 196-acre Cabral vineyard from the Charles Krug Winery.

"This purchase will make us a major player in the Carneros region and complement our substantial vineyard holdings in the Rutherford area," Beckstoffer declared.

The Cabral purchase makes Beckstoffer the largest vineyard owner in the valley without a winery.

He says he was able to pick up the property because it needed to be replanted.

Charles Krug's Marc Mondavi said that his family's priorities at present are in replanting other holdings here. Mondavi said Krug has a number of older vineyards in need of replanting, replanting not prompted by phylloxera, he adds.

Save for 15 acres of chardonnay planted just a few years ago, the majority of the Cabral vineyard will be replanted to red varietals in the next year or two, Beckstoffer said. In addition to pinot noir, merlot and syrah are under consideration.

The vineyard is currently planted to chardonnay and pinot noir.

Fruit from this vineyard will continue to go to the Charles Krug Winery until the replanting occurs. Beckstoffer indicated he has had several inquiries from other winemaking ventures about future Cabral crops.

"I want to give credit to the Peter Mondavi family for selecting this site in 1970," he added. "It has good soils and plenty of water. It's right next door to Beaulieu vineyard number 5 - a property that Andre Tchelistcheff developed in the '60s. It's right on the Bay bordered by the railroad tracks and a state wildlife preserve."

Beckstoffer said the existing vineyard is planted on St. George rootstock and has not been infected with phylloxera. "But the vines are old and just need to be replanted.

"We enjoyed working with Marc and Peter Mondavi. We are pleased to be doing business with one of the Napa Valley's great families and particularly happy that this important vineyard stays in the hands of a Napa Valley family."

Beckstoffer now owns a total of 700 acres of vineyard in Napa County, 450 of which are in the Rutherford area. Additionally, he owns 1,000 acres of vines in Mendocino County.

Only 5 percent of the grapes harvested from Beckstoffer's vineyards are earmarked for the winemaking effort owned by his family, Fremont Creek. About 10,000 cases of cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc are produced at Heublein Fine Wines in St. Helena

each year for Fremont Creek.

That leaves the bulk of the Beckstoffer fruit for 25 other winemaking operations in northern California. Beaulieu gets a substantial share of the Napa Valley fruit, while the Mendocino County grapes go to such operations as Simi, Fetzer and Kendall-Jackson, Beckstoffer said.

As Beckstoffer has acquired more and more vineyard property, his vineyard management business has been cut back.

Despite all the doom and gloom broadcast about the wine industry today, Beckstoffer believes “the current difficulties will pass.

“We continue to believe in and are committed to the long-term potential of premium North Coast wines which we feel will be substantial.

“I have great optimism and hope for our business. That’s why we wound up putting money where our mouth is.”