

# Beckstoffer expands vineyard holdings

## Beaulieu parcel near Oakville reportedly a multimillion dollar buy

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OAKVILLE - Ensuring his place as third largest vineyard owner in the Napa Valley, St. Helena's Andy Beckstoffer has purchased a renowned 89-acre vineyard that's been a part of Beaulieu Vineyard's holdings for half a century.

The owner of the family-owned Beckstoffer Vineyards reportedly paid \$3.5 million for the cabernet sauvignon vineyard known as "BV No. 4," located just across Highway 29 from Opus One and the Oakville Grocery.

Beckstoffer said Friday the grapes from this vineyard will continue to go, in part, to Beaulieu, for its Rutherford cabernet sauvignon and Georges de Latour private reserve cabernet sauvignon.

Prior to Beaulieu's purchase of the vineyard in 1943, BV No. 4 was known as part of Hamilton Crabb's acclaimed To-Kalon Vineyard.

Thrilled with the purchase of the property, Beckstoffer said, "I know of no single vineyard which has made so significant a contribution to the Napa Valley both through the pre-Prohibition To-Kalon wines to the post-Prohibition Beaulieu Vineyard cabernets."

The To-Kalon vineyard was first planted in 1859 by Hamilton W. Crabb, considered one of California's viticultural pioneers.

In the 1870s, Crabb replaced Agoston Haraszthy as the leading experimenter of grape varieties at his Oakville nursery. In the 1880s, Crabb's wines were ranked among the top in the Napa Valley, along with Inglenook, Charles Krug and Beringer.

Crabb held onto the vineyard for 40 years. He told it to Edward S. Churchill in 1899, who in turn

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sold it Georges de Latour in 1943.

Of his plans for the cabernet sauvignon grapes grown on BV No. 4, Beckstoffer said he'd also "like to get some smaller winemakers a chance to buy some of this fruit as well."

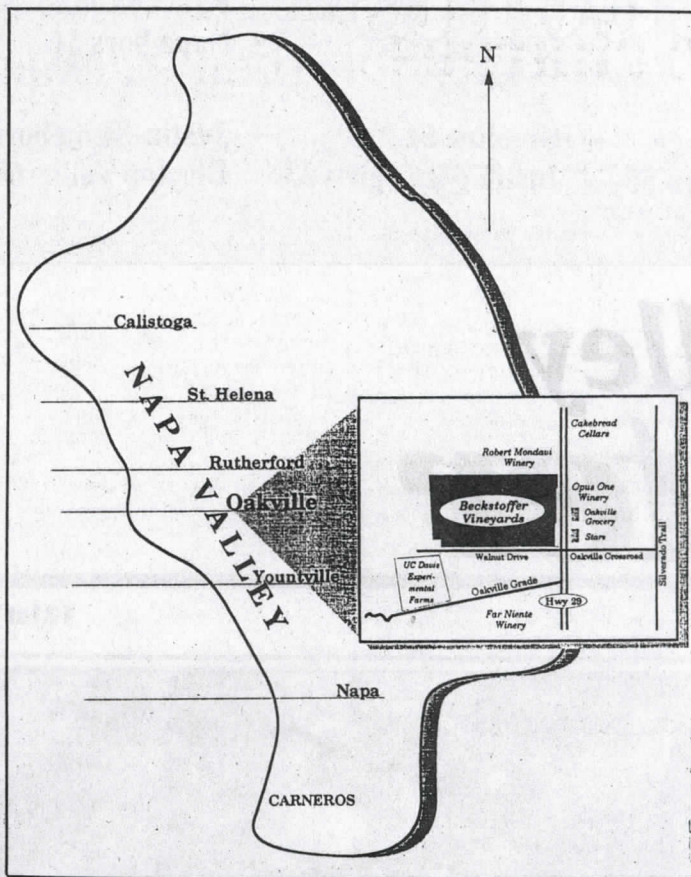
He said all but 12 acres are planted to cabernet. He expects to replant that section with new cabernet clones this coming spring.

It's ironic that Beckstoffer is purchasing the vineyard from the firm he came to the valley to work for in 1969, Heublein. The Connecticut-based Heublein owns both Beaulieu and Inglenook winemaking operations.

In fact, Beckstoffer formed a vineyard farming company for Heublein in 1970, a firm he wound up purchasing in 1973. For a time, Beckstoffer Vineyards was a vineyard management firm. Now it concentrates on farming vineyards the family company itself owns in both Napa Valley and Mendocino.

In 1992, Beckstoffer Vineyards sold grapes to 25 wineries in Napa, Mendocino, Sonoma and on the Peninsula.

While Beckstoffer declined to discuss the purchase price for BV



No. 4, he did say it was "not cheap." Another source said Beckstoffer paid about \$39,000 an acre for the prized vineyard.

"It's a treasure," the new owner admitted. "I'm pleased that a Napa Valley family got it rather than an outside investor. Property like this never comes up for sale except in difficult times."

"This is a win/win situation for us," said Heublein spokesman Jack Shea. "It's a chance for us to continue to get grapes used in quality BV wines... (and) to get a fair price for the vineyard."

Shea said Heublein did not put the property on the market because it was having cash flow problems. He pointed out Heublein's owner, Grand Metropolitan PLC, is experiencing increased sales and profits "despite an uneven improvement in the U.S. economy."

"BV is the crown jewel in our

super-premium wine business," Shea boasted.

Beckstoffer has been buying up prized vineyards for the past several years. Among his holdings are:

- Beaulieu's vineyard No. 3, 250 acres of cabernet in Rutherford, purchased in 1988.

- Charles Krug's Cabral vineyard, 200 acres of pinot noir and chardonnay in the touted Carneros district, purchased in 1992.

- Louis M. Martini's Las Amigas vineyard, 120 acres of pinot and chardonnay in Carneros, purchased earlier this year.

The largest non-winery vineyardist in the Napa Valley, Beckstoffer ranks third in vineyard holdings here, after Robert Mondavi and Heublein.

In addition to its Napa Valley holdings, the Beckstoffer family owns an additional 900 acres of vineyards in Mendocino county.