



Top Grape G R O W E R S

American/Western Fruit Grower presents the nation's largest grape producers, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities of grape growers nationwide.

IT TAKES a great deal of commitment and dedication to become a leader in your industry. You'll find some examples of this hard work in the Top Grape Growers report, presented by *American/Western Fruit Grower*. The list is based on and ranked according to grape acreage owned or leased by

one company that is responsible for maintaining it. By making the right decisions and using their resources effectively, these growers have worked their way up to become the largest operations in the industry.

Within this report, you'll also be able to take a sneak peak at one of the

companies on the list, and the path it has taken to success. Finally, while grape growers in the Eastern U.S. may not be as large in size as some of their Western counterparts, their numbers have increased dramatically, and you can read about their own concerns and resources.

| Company | Year Founded | Grape Acreage | Crops Grown | Total Acreage | 2003 Rank |
|---|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 Bronco Wine Company, CA* | n/a | 25,000 | Grapes | 25,000 | -- |
| 2 E & J Gallo Winery, CA* | 1933 | 23,000 | Grapes | 23,000 | 1 |
| 3 Beringer Wine Estates, CA | 1876 | 10,254 | Grapes | 10,254 | 2 |
| 4 Giumarra Vineyards Corp., CA* | 1930 | 10,210 | Grapes | 10,210 | 3 |
| 5 Delicato Vineyards, CA | 1924 | 8500 | Grapes | 8500 | 8 |
| 6 Vino Farms, CA* | 1973 | 7353 | Grapes | 7353 | 5 |
| 7 Monterey Pacific, CA | 1992 | 6880 | Grapes, Lemons | 6986 | 6 |
| 8 Gerawan Farming, CA | 1938 | 6227 | Grapes, Stone Fruit | 12,085 | 9 |
| 9 John Kautz Farms, CA | 1948 | 5550 | Grapes, Apples, Cherries | 5750 | 12 |
| 10 Trincherro Family Estates, CA | 1947 | 5454 | Grapes | 5454 | 10 |
| 11 Scheid Vineyards, CA | 1972 | 5380 | Grapes | 5380 | 11 |
| 12 Delano Farms, CA | 1989 | 5000 | Grapes | 5000 | 13 |
| 13 Sun World International, CA* | 1976 | 4654 | Grapes, Stone Fruit | 6575 | 15 |
| 14 Golden State Vintners, CA | 1980 | 4261 | Grapes | 4261 | 7 |
| 15 Bath & Mahil Farms, CA | 1996 | 4240 | Grapes | 4240 | 19 |
| 16 Beckstoffer Vineyards, CA | 1973 | 3762 | Grapes | 3762 | 20 |
| 17 Stimson Lane, WA | 1986 | 3500 | Grapes | 3500 | 17 |
| 18 General Vineyard Services, CA* | n/a | 3000 | Grapes | 3000 | -- |
| 19 Valley Farm Management, CA | n/a | 2947 | Grapes | 2947 | 21 |
| 20 Stokes Farms, CA | 1954 | 2839 | Grapes, Cherries, Alfalfa | 4529 | 24 |
| 21 Premiere Partners, c/o Westchester Group, IL | 1986 | 2496 | Grapes, Apples, Cherries, Almonds | 13,007 | 25 |
| 22 Anthony Vineyards, CA | n/a | 2485 | Grapes | 2485 | 22 |
| 23 Pacific Vineyard, CA | n/a | 2377 | Grapes | 2377 | -- |
| 24 Lent/Burden Farming, CA | 1992 | 2252 | Grapes, Nuts | 5691 | -- |
| 25 Farmland Management Services, CA | 1986 | 2084 | Grapes, Stone Fruit, Nuts, Apples | 19,546 | 23 |

* = estimated acreage

Spotlighting A Top Grower

THE path that growers take in working their way to the top of the industry, and the challenges they overcome, differ for each organization. Here is an up-close look at one of the companies that made the Top Grape Growers list, and how it got there.

Beckstoffer Vineyards

www.beckstoffervineyards.com

One of the main keys to the growth of Beckstoffer Vineyards has been its commitment to quality through the use of technology. "We have focused on using modern vineyard techniques, and we constantly experiment with mechanical, production, and pruning practices," says owner Andy Beckstoffer, who also points out that the company was the first grape grower in Napa Valley to use drip irrigation.



Beckstoffer also says it's important for them to analyze how they are perceived, both by outsiders and from within. For example, they refer to themselves as entrepreneurs rather than farmers, mainly because of their focus not just on land use, but on the people behind the success of the company. By promoting the personal side of the business, "we are able to hopefully improve the economic, political, and social status of grape growers.

As with any company, there have been bumps along the road. Since its formation in 1973, Beckstoffer has weathered four recessions, the earliest of which forced the company to restructure. In response to these events, Beckstoffer says his company followed two strategies to help them turn the tide:

- **Promoting the vineyard**, and not just the wine. Beckstoffer designated each vineyard for specific wines, which helped create value not only for the wine, but also for the vineyard where it came from.

- **Pricing formula**. Rather than base their grape prices on crop sizes or economic indexes, Beckstoffer instead bases them on the price of wine itself. This results in a more direct correlation between grape and wine prices and value.

ALTHOUGH they may not be as large as their Western counterparts in terms of vineyard acreage, grape growers in New York, Michigan, and other areas of the Eastern U.S. are expanding their market presence. One of the fastest-growing trends among Eastern growers, both small and large, is the use of wine tasting, tours, bed and breakfasts, and other value-added benefits for wineries. In order to produce the highest-quality grapes and wines, these growers have their own unique production practices, as well as market concerns and resources at their fingertips.

From The Finger Lakes

Many grape growers in New York were on hand in late February for the Finger Lakes Grape Growers Convention. The event highlighted several of the issues these growers are dealing with.

- **Bud injury**. A cold spell in early January caused the worst cases of bud injury since 1993. However, Cornell University professor Bob Pool has developed a modified pruning program at the Chardonnay vineyard at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva that could help growers maintain a sizable crop.

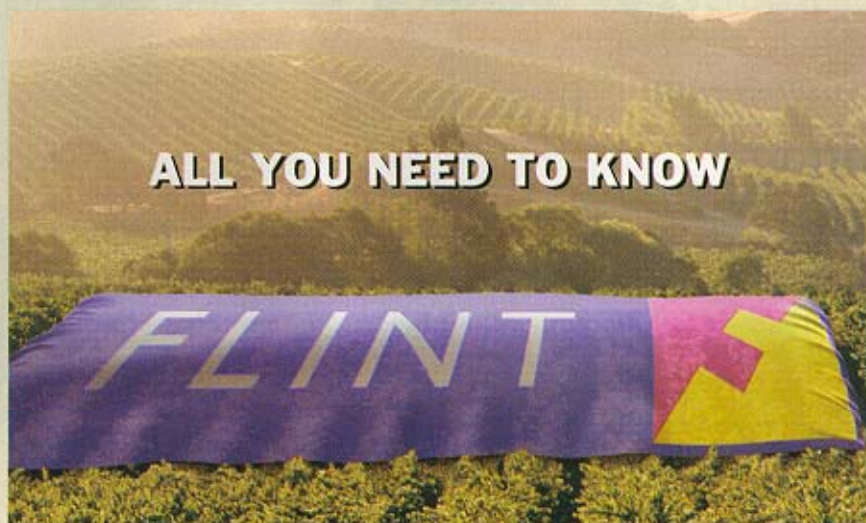
- **Bulk wine markets**. Following a record crop and poor ripening conditions in 2003, some growers turned to mechanical thinning with grape harvesters, which not only reduced the heavy crop to a manageable level, but also improved Brix and ripening standards.

- **Fungicide resistance**, especially in strobilurins, and disease management after a wet season.

- The ability of small wineries to source **cold-sensitive varieties**.

Online In Michigan

Growers in the Great Lake State have a new Web resource that is just a click away. The site from Michigan State University, www.grapes.msu.edu, highlights issues related to integrated pest management (IPM) and cultural practices for wine and juice grape growers, including pest ID information, links to vineyard management advice, pest scouting, and weather information. The site also describes potential physiological and chemical disorders such as nutrient deficiencies that can occur in the vineyard. Along with this site, growers can also order a pocket guide for grape scouting by going to www.ipm.msu.edu/GrapePocket.htm.



Bayer CropScience