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ANDY BECKSTOFFER

NAPA VALLEY'S
MOST POWERFUL
GRAPEGROWER

EXPLORE
SANTA BARBARA
WINE COUNTRY

SUMMER WINES
DELICIOUS ROSÉS
AND SPARKLERS

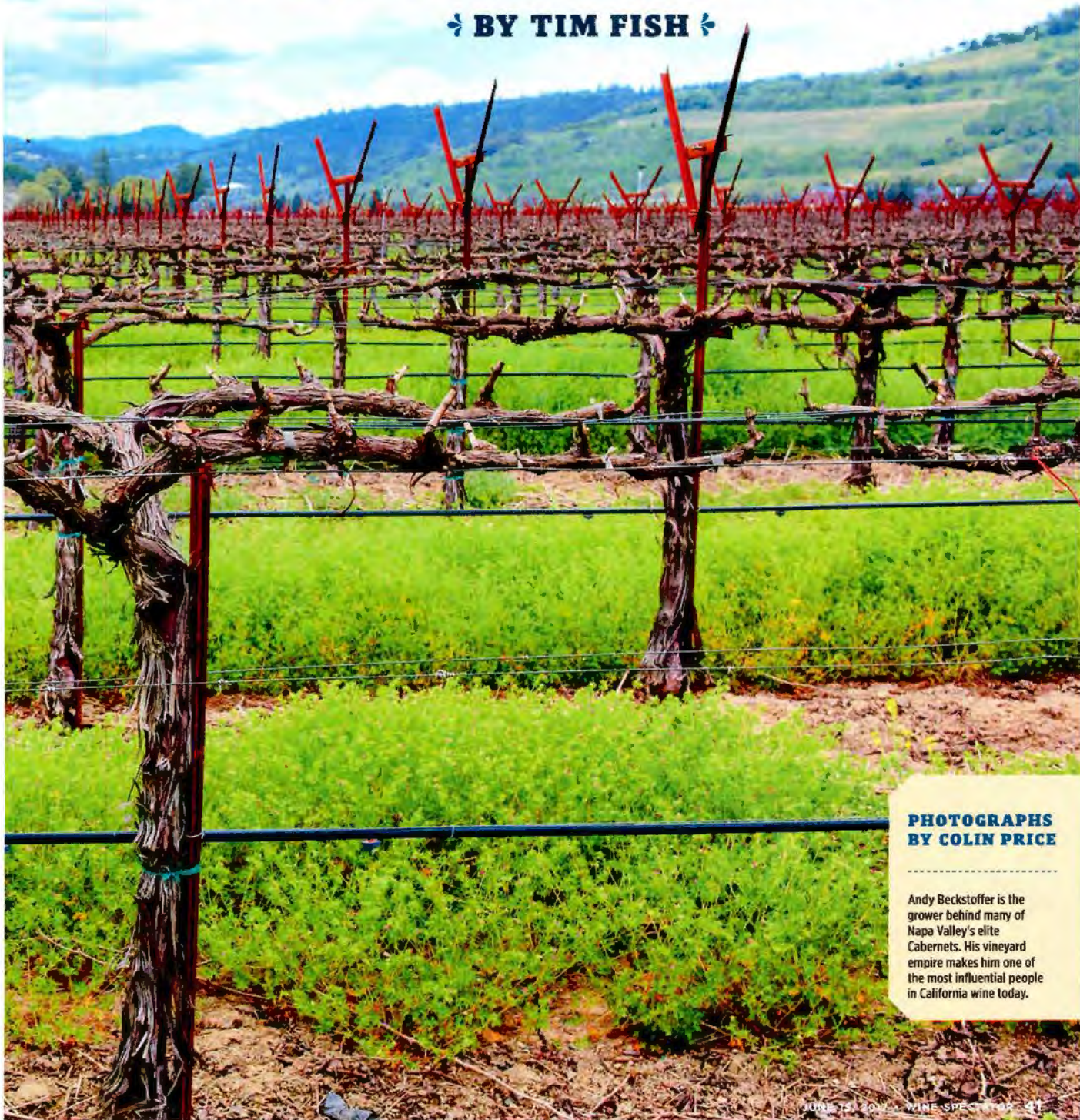
SOUTH AFRICA
SYRAH AND
CHENIN BLANC STAR
LONG ISLAND WINES





Classic Wines, Treasured Vines

✦ BY TIM FISH ✦



**PHOTOGRAPHS
BY COLIN PRICE**

Andy Beckstoffer is the grower behind many of Napa Valley's elite Cabernets. His vineyard empire makes him one of the most influential people in California wine today.

Andy Beckstoffer's High-Powered Lineup



An eye-opening number of Napa Valley's highest-rated Cabernet Sauvignons have one thing in common—and it's not the winemaker or winery behind them. They all rely on grapes grown in vineyards owned by Andy Beckstoffer.

These are wines of collectors' dreams, the likes of Schrader Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley CCS Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2007 (100 points on the *Wine Spectator* 100-point scale), Paul Hobbs Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2007 (97) and Carter Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon The Grand Daddy 2012 (96).

There are other great wines, of course. But the name Beckstoffer seems ubiquitous in Napa's top tier and is found on the labels of 37 different California wineries overall. Winemakers pay as much as \$40,000 a ton for these Cabernet grapes, whereas the Napa average is closer to \$6,500.

The steep price comes with the territory. The company controls some of the most historic and significant vineyards in Napa; over the past 20 years, more than 70 wines made from Beckstoffer fruit have earned classic scores of 95 or more points in *Wine Spectator* blind tastings.

In all, Beckstoffer owns nearly 900 vineyard acres in Napa, worth an estimated \$350 million, as well as 2,700 additional vineyard acres in Mendocino and Lake counties. High-profile vineyards like To Kalon and Dr. Crane are only a tiny part of Beckstoffer's production, accounting for about 500 tons of the total 14,000 he picked last year, but they represent a big chunk of his revenue.

"We're not selling an agricultural commodity," he says of his top vineyards. "We're selling you a branded product, and our brand—

the family name and the vineyard name—is probably more important than the winery brand."

If Beckstoffer sounds cocky, it's because he is. He has never melo-d, and he looks younger than his 77 years. He remains an audacious personality with an ample ego, who has been a controversial figure in Napa Valley for nearly 50 years.

He has been single-minded in his pursuit of success—or money, his detractors will say—even courting financial disaster only to bounce back through brass-knuckle business savvy and swagger to become one of the valley's ultimate insiders.

The yellow farmhouse with the steep red roof and wrap-around porch seems as deeply rooted in Napa Valley as the old pines and oaks that tower over it. But looks can be deceiving, and the building, in Rutherford, isn't the vestige of the 19th century it appears to be.

Standing on the porch, Beckstoffer smiles when asked what year it was built. "1991," he says of the house that serves as headquarters for Beckstoffer Vineyards. "Does it remind you of anything?" He doesn't wait for an answer, explaining that the design is a knock-off of Inglenook's Chiles House, built in 1856 and among the oldest homes in the valley.

Beckstoffer is used to creating his own history. He arrived in Napa Valley in 1969, at age 29, as a corporate deal-maker and numbers-cruncher. Since then, his trajectory closely aligns with the stupendous rise of the modern Napa Valley wine industry.

His best-known parcel is his 83 acres of the famed To Kalon vineyard, an Oakville planting whose history dates to 1868. Georges III Vineyard, which borders the headquarters, is 251 acres of vines first planted in 1895 and was the source for memorable Beaulieu

SELECTED RECENT RELEASES FROM HISTORIC BECKSTOFFER VINEYARDS

WineSpectator.com members can access James Laube's complete reviews for the wines charted below using the online Wine Ratings search.

TO KALON

WINE SCORE PRICE

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard MMXIII 2013 **96 \$400**
1.5L

Powerful, with an explosive burst of juicy red and black fruits shaded by licorice, spice and oak. Shows harmony and finesse.

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **95 \$175**

Pure crushed berry and floral aromas lead to vibrant blackberry, wild berry, anise, cedar, tobacco leaf and melted licorice flavors.

TOR Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon 2013 **95 \$175**

Rich and layered, with tiers of spicy oak, vivid wild berry, currant and plum flavors, framed by refreshing acidity and firm tannins.

ALPHA OMEGA Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Beckstoffer To Kalon 2013 **94 \$200**

Tightly focused, offering a masterful balance of loamy currant and blackberry notes, with savory tar and dried herb flavors.

PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2012 **94 \$425**

Seamless, with generous red and black fruits, spice and floral notes and earth-scented tannins. Savory details gain depth on the finish.

MACAULEY Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **94 \$175**

Broad and rich, with blackberry, licorice, savory herb and underbrush notes accented by spicy, toasty oak flavors.

REALM Beckstoffer To Kalon Napa Valley 2013 **94 \$175**

Bold, with deftly balanced flavors of loamy earth, dark berry and spice, shaded with cedary oak and finishing with olive notes.

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley CCS Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **94 \$175**

Robust, rustic and deep, with zesty dark red and black fruit, mineral acidity and fine-grained tannins.

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley T6 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **94 \$175**

Jazzy mocha notes lead to licorice, berry, chocolate, savory herb and underbrush flavors. Flexes its tannic strength on the finish.

CARTER Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard The Grand Daddy 2013 **93 \$160**

Unbridled up front, with vibrant acidity and taut dark berry flavors, fanning out with floral scents and tiers of wild berry, herb and spice.

PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **93 \$475**

Explosive, wall-to-wall flavors are deeply extracted and firmly tannic, centered on dark berry, currant, anise and cedar.

PURLIEU Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2013 **92 \$180**

On solid footing, with firm, fine-grained tannins amid dusty blackberry, wild berry, black olive, anise and cedary oak flavors.

LAS PIEDRAS

WINE SCORE PRICE

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Colesworthy Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2013 **96 \$400**
1.5L

Combines power and finesse, showing blackberry, licorice, graphite, crushed rock and savory herb notes. Spicy, toasty oak adds nuance.

PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2013 **94 \$250**

Refreshingly taut, dense and vibrant, this is well-built, with dark berry, currant, plum and blueberry flavors, broadening midpalate.

ALPHA OMEGA Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Las Piedras 2013 **92 \$200**

Rich and full-bodied, offering dark berry, anise, gravel and spicy oak notes, with loamy earth accents and gravelly texture on the finish.

ANTHEM Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2013 **92 \$110**

Perfumed plum, currant and black cherry notes are firm and supple, with acidity and tannins providing traction and length.

QUIVET Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2013 **91 \$125**

Sophisticated, with creamy oak and dark berry notes. Hints of licorice, sage, crushed rock and herb add flavor and textural dimension.

GEORGE III

WINE SCORE PRICE

ADOBE ROAD Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Vineyard Georges III A1-Block 2013 **94 \$175**

Refined, with a juicy core of blackberry, raspberry, anise, cedar and black licorice flavors. Walks the tightrope of intensity and grace.

SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford GIII Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard 2013 **94 \$175**

Immense, with graphite, crushed rock, licorice and dark berry flavors and gritty tannins, smoothing on the finish.

ALPHA OMEGA Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford Beckstoffer Georges III 2013 **93 \$200**

Shows fresh-turned earth, cedar and spice, with tar and dried dark berry notes, supported by firm, fine-grained tannins.

ADOBE ROAD Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Vineyard Georges III F-Block 2013 **92 \$125**

Sleek and refined, with a polished core of spicy oak, dark berry, loamy earth, licorice and graphite notes, combining power with finesse.

MYRIAD Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Vineyard Georges III 2013 **92 \$95**

Complex, with intense flavors of dusty, savory earth, crushed dark berries, cassis and black licorice. Full-bodied and persistent.

DR. CRANE

WINE SCORE PRICE

PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2013 **94 \$265**

This sleek version is focused on snappy red and dark berry flavors, with dusty earth accents and cedar- and mocha-accented oak.

ALPHA OMEGA Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Dr. Crane 2013 **93 \$235**

Refined and rich, offering a supple texture and flavors of blackberry and black licorice, shaded by cedary oak and firmed with tannins.

REALM Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Napa Valley 2013 **93 \$175**

Rich and layered, with savory herb and underbrush aromas and dark flavors of berry, mocha, anise and cedar. Cabernet and Petit Verdot.

PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2012 **92 \$265**

Tannic at points, but complex and refined in texture and aroma, with a mix of currant, anise, dried berry, cedary oak, tobacco and cigar box.

MYRIAD Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2013 **91 \$125**

Robust yet charming, with dark berry, mocha, licorice, cedary oak, dried herb and graphite flavors. Turns supple midpalate.

MISSOURI HOPPER

WINE SCORE PRICE

ALPHA OMEGA Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Beckstoffer Missouri Hopper 2013 **92 \$200**

Intense, with crisp acidity and fine-grained tannins cloaking licorice, blackberry and wild berry flavors, accented by crushed rock hints.

JANZEN Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Missouri Hopper Vineyard 2013 **90 \$125**

Intense and powerful, supple and graceful, offering ultraripe blackberry and black licorice flavors without losing velocity.

Cabernet Sauvignons in the 1960s and '70s. His other historic vineyards include the 21-acre Dr. Crane and 22-acre Las Piedras, both in St. Helena.

"To Kalon is one of the real jewels of Napa Valley," says Tony Correia of the California Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, which tracks vineyard values.

Prime vineyard land on the floor of the valley is worth \$300,000 to \$400,000 an acre, with recent deals involving select parcels in the heart of the valley closing in on \$1 million an acre. It's a quantum leap from when

Beckstoffer purchased his parcel of To Kalon in 1993 (then called Beaulieu Vineyard No. 4) for an estimated price of \$44,000 an acre.

Fred Schrader was blown away the first time he tasted a Cabernet from Beckstoffer's To Kalon. It was a 1999-vintage barrel sample from another winery. "[It was] just rocket fuel," Schrader says. "It was that good—it was the complete balance and purity and concentration." Schrader released the first To Kalon under his own label with the 2001 vintage.

Winemaker Paul Hobbs, who makes three vineyard-designated Cabernets from Beckstoffer, has worked with the grower for 30 years. "Andy's a real pro," Hobbs says. "I have amazing respect for what he's done."

Just as Beckstoffer took a gamble buying BV No. 4 to create To Kalon, he's rolling the dice again in Lake County. While Napa has the prestige, he says Lake County is where the action is for an entrepreneur. In the past 20 years, he has invested significantly in Lake County, planting 1,500 acres in the remote Red Hills region.

Yet Beckstoffer's attachment to Napa remains strong. "The emotion and passion for the land develops over a long period of time," Beckstoffer says. "I get antsy if I'm away from here more than 10 days."

Despite Beckstoffer's many decades in California, Virginia still lingers in his voice. Lanky and spry, he's known for his cowboy boots and easy laugh. He loves sports and has season tickets to the San Francisco 49ers and Giants. He refuses to miss a Warriors game.

Beckstoffer has been married 56 years. He and his wife, Betty, have five children. David, 55, is president and COO of the company. Tuck, 50, worked with Andy before starting his own wine company; last year he bought Napa's Dancing Hare winery to house his six labels. Kristin, 49, designs wine labels as a graphic artist. Dana, 52, raises rabbits and chickens in Petaluma. The youngest, Steven, 43, works as a Caterpillar tractor sales representative in Southern California.

Though Andy is the head of a big family, Tuck says that he was not a nurturing dad. "I'm not going to tell you I had the most fun-loving childhood. He'd be the first to say that," Tuck states.

Beckstoffer himself sheepishly recalls a story about his early days in the wine industry, when he was spending more time traveling



Beckstoffer (left) and Beaulieu winemaker André Tchelistcheff (above in 1988) met in the late 1960s when Beckstoffer worked for Heublein, which owned BV at the time.

than with his family: "My son called the neighbor, 'Daddy.'"

Even once the family settled in Napa, Beckstoffer spent most his time and money on the business, even when money was tight.

"It was a slog through the mud through the late '80s," Tuck recalls. "We did not have nice things."

David describes his father as an aggressive personality. "That can be good and bad," David says. "You generally know when he's in the room, and he's not shy about telling you what he thinks. He's fair but he can be stubborn."

Schrader and Hobbs call Beckstoffer a tough negotiator. "When

you have a meeting with Andy, you don't walk in unprepared or you're going to get killed," Hobbs says.

Beckstoffer concedes that he has a reputation for being tough, even divisive. "I don't feel like I have enemies. I like to think of it as grudging respect."

Not everyone in the valley sees it that way. "Do I know anybody who likes Andy? I don't know, I guess there are some," said a vintner who asked to remain anonymous.

Much of the animosity toward Beckstoffer comes from his stance against what he considers overdevelopment in Napa. While he says he's not a strident environmentalist, preserving agricultural land is important to him.

In 1989, he pushed for Napa's landmark Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO), which among other mandates requires wineries in the valley to use at least 75 percent Napa grapes. Existing facilities were exempted but any expansion or new facility must comply. The WDO has been updated and challenged frequently over the years, and some vintners view it as governmental overreach.

Controlling hillside vineyard developments is another issue for Beckstoffer. Many critics see his support for both efforts as an attempt to shut the door on newcomers and thereby increase the value of his own vineyards. Such initiatives are also seen as over-regulating the local business culture.

Beckstoffer's role in the valley has engendered skepticism since his earliest days there. Napa was a quiet farming community back then, and he was among the first wave of corporate executives to take the reins. At a time when a handshake was the only contract you needed in the valley, here came a cocky young guy talking about business plans angled at turning a profit.

There's an often-told story about Beckstoffer from the mid-1970s which illustrates that he wasn't interested in playing by the old Napa rules. In that decade, growers were largely considered second-class citizens, and a handful of long-established wineries had all the clout. As one of the founders of the Napa Valley Grapegrowers Association, Beckstoffer attended a large meeting with these powerful winery owners.

"The vintners sat around the table and the grapegrowers were supposed to sit in chairs around the outside of the table. I thought, 'Screw that, I'm sitting at the table.'"

Beckstoffer's office is decorated with mementoes of his personal life and long career. He has a mild M&M's addiction; every desk seems to have a bowl. Aerial portraits of his vineyards line the stairwell and there's a bookshelf of photos by his door. There are snapshots of him with Jimmy Carter, Mother Teresa and Walter Cronkite.

There's also a 1970 photo of Beckstoffer engaged in what appears to be an intense discussion with André Tchelistcheff, then winemaker at Beaulieu. Beckstoffer was panicked about rain ruining the harvest, and recalls the moment: "André was saying, 'It will be fine.'"

Beaulieu and Inglenook, two storied Napa wineries, were the reason Beckstoffer came to the valley in the first place, and his time working with them laid the groundwork for his life today.

Beckstoffer's father owned a prosperous mill in Richmond, Va., and made fine woodwork and cabinetry. Beckstoffer attended Virginia Tech on a football scholarship and received an MBA from Dartmouth.

In the mid-1960s, he was hired by food-and-drinks giant Heublein in Connecticut to work on acquisition strategies. While Beckstoffer didn't know much about wine, he saw opportunity in California and played an instrumental role in convincing the company to invest in wine, and in Napa in particular.

In 1968, Heublein bought United Vintners, which owned Inglenook in Rutherford and the now-defunct Italian Swiss Colony in Sonoma County. Months later, Heublein bought Beaulieu. Beckstoffer moved his family to California, where he was tasked with creating a vineyard-management subsidiary, Vinifera Development.

Beckstoffer knew a lot about numbers, but wasn't a wine drinker. In his 2015 book *The Winemaker*, Richard Peterson says that when he worked with Beckstoffer at Beaulieu, Beckstoffer wasn't particularly devoted to quality. "He asked me why I was using Chenin Blanc to make [BV's sparkling wines]," Peterson writes.

When Peterson explained that he wanted to use Chardonnay, as was common for France's top sparklers, he says he was interrupted by Beckstoffer: "'Don't you realize you're paying \$900 a ton for Chardonnay when you could get Thompson Seedless for \$60?'"

Peterson scoffed at the suggestion. "With a condescending grin,



Fred Schrader (center) bottled his first Beckstoffer Cabernet with the 2001 vintage, while Paul Hobbs (right) has worked with the grower for 30 years. Both vintners have produced some of Napa Valley's best-ever wines from fruit sourced from Beckstoffer sites.

Andy looked at me and said, 'Dick, you'll never make a million dollars.'"

By 1973, Beckstoffer had worked for Heublein for seven years and the company was rethinking its move into wine. Profits weren't what they expected and a boycott by the César Chávez-led United Farm Workers union was causing problems.

The company wanted out of grapegrowing and decided to unload its 1,200 acres of vines in Napa and Mendocino. Beckstoffer, president of Vinifera Development at the time, was told to find a buyer, but he was unsuccessful. Instead, he decided to buy it himself.

Where Heublein saw headaches, Beckstoffer saw a way to gain a foothold in the valley. It was a highly leveraged deal, with

Beckstoffer paying \$7,500 in cash and Heublein itself lending him \$6 million to ensure its grape supply. "That \$7,500 was everything he had," Tuck recalls.

Beckstoffer barely made it. Grape prices tumbled in the mid-'70s, with Napa Cabernet dropping from \$800 to \$400 a ton. Inflation was also running wild. By 1975, Heublein was dropping its farming contracts with Beckstoffer's new company. "That was the backbone of the business. That was our cash flow," he recalls.

By 1978, things seemed to be falling apart. Beckstoffer defaulted on his loans and owed about \$7 million. Heublein seized about 700 acres in Napa.

But Beckstoffer managed to hold onto two vineyards still in his portfolio today: Carneros Creek and Melrose. He renamed the company Beckstoffer Vineyards and spent the next five years getting out of his financial hole. "I had to sign personal servitude contracts," he said in a 2007 *Wine Spectator* story.

"He's taken a lot of risks," David says. "Most people would've become risk-averse after that, but he didn't back down, and started over."

As the grapegrowing business recovered, Beckstoffer was able to slowly buy vineyards again. In 1988, he bought Georges III and followed that five years later with the 83-acre BV No. 4, a key vineyard in Beaulieu's Georges de Latour Private Reserve. He reportedly paid Heublein \$3.9 million for No. 4, considered expensive at the time, especially since the site had a phylloxera infestation and required replanting.

"We're not selling an agricultural commodity. We're selling you a branded product."

—ANDY BECKSTOFFER

He renamed it Beckstoffer To Kalon, since it was once part of that historic vineyard. That led to a 2002 lawsuit by Robert Mondavi Winery against Schrader for using the To Kalon name on his label. The parties eventually settled out of court, and Beckstoffer retained the right to use the name.

Beckstoffer had become convinced that the future of Napa Valley rested in vineyards, not just winemakers. Back in the 1980s, the winemaker was king and great

wines were made in the cellar, blending different grape sources to build complexity.

"Showing off a single *terroir* was boring," he recalls. Beckstoffer saw potential in building his own brand through vineyard-designated wines. He liked to tell people that a single vineyard was like a beautiful woman with a chipped tooth. "Her charm," he says, "was in the way she carried her defects."

Along the way, he raised eyebrows in Napa with a grape-pricing formula he devised in 1976. A ton of grapes from his historic vineyards would cost 100 times the price of the finished bottle of wine, something stipulated in every contract. For example, a winemaker selling a Cabernet for \$400 would pay \$40,000 a ton.

"We joke with Andy that we need to send a Brink's truck to pay for the grapes," Hobbs says.

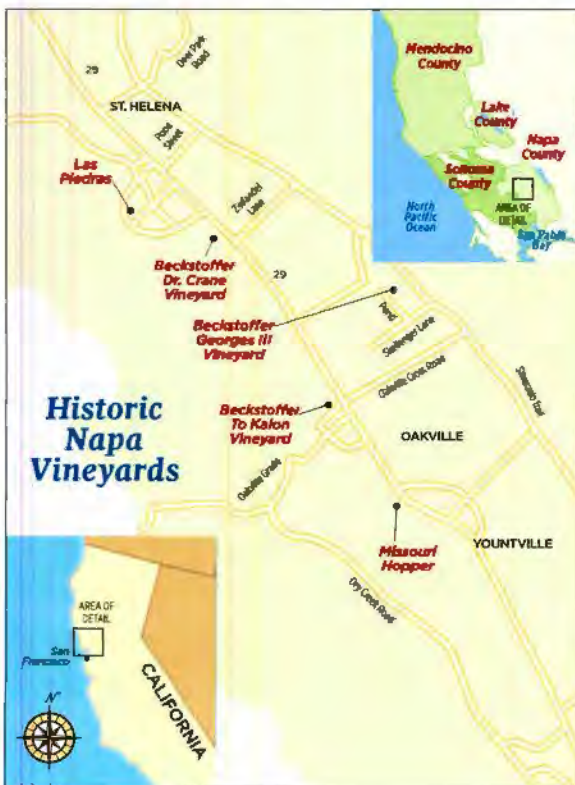
Beckstoffer is unapologetic about his pricing. Traditionally, growers want to grow as much as they can for a higher revenue stream, while the wineries want to underpay. "We don't have that conflict anymore," Beckstoffer says. "Years ago I would have said that we

couldn't make money farming vineyards. I don't feel like that anymore."

But while he may have found a way to make vineyards profitable, are his grapes worth the price? "They must be, because I keep buying them," Hobbs says with a laugh. "The wines sell and I'm very pleased with the results I'm getting." Winemakers generally trust Beckstoffer and his crew, and as Beckstoffer likes to say, "We don't tell them how to make wine and we don't let them tell us how to grow grapes."

Beckstoffer's price might be aggressive, but Schrader says you can't argue with the quality. "There's an amazing attention to detail in the vineyards," Schrader adds. "Andy is a businessman, and he has an exceptional product, and he's intent on getting the last dollar for it. Who can blame him?"

Although much of Beckstoffer's energy is focused on Lake County (see "Upping the Ante in Lake County," page 50), he keeps an eye to the past and the future of Napa Valley.



Beckstoffer Parcels

NAPA VALLEY

VINEYARD/ACRES UNDER VINE	
Bourn	12
Carneros Creek	34
Carneros Lake	166
Dr. Crane	21
Georges III	251
Las Amigas	123
Las Piedras	22
Melrose	82
Missouri Hopper	36
Orchard Avenue	64
To Kalon	83
Total Napa	894

MENDOCINO COUNTY

VINEYARD/ACRES UNDER VINE	
Beckstoffer III	61
Feliz Creek	137
Hopland	323
Mendocino 101	124
Russian River	106
Vinifera	454
Total Mendocino	1,205

RED HILLS (LAKE COUNTY)

VINEYARD/ACRES UNDER VINE	
Amber Knolls & Amber Knolls West	949
Crimson Ridge	550
Total Red Hills	1,499
Total	1,598

Eventually, his children will take over the company. He recalls telling them early on, "Go away and find out what the world is like and where your name doesn't mean anything. Find out what it's like and be a success."

Indeed, David remembers how, as a teenager in the 1970s, he couldn't wait to leave the sleepy valley behind. But in 1997, he walked away from a high-paying corporate job to return home.

These days, Beckstoffer focuses on the big picture and allows David to handle many of the details. Retirement is not in his plans.

"He truly loves what he's doing," Tuck says of his father. "I want him to slow down, go to Mexico and enjoy himself, but he just won't do it."

Schrader puts it this way, "Andy lives the game. He has a complete passion for it."

Driving west on Rutherford Road, Beckstoffer recalls it as a quiet lane in the 1970s, a place where he often rode his horse. Today, luxury vehicles zoom past. Beckstoffer believes overdevelopment is the biggest threat to the valley. "Some people are trying to make this a fantasy land." Napa is becoming too much about winery destinations and luxury resorts and homes, he says. It should be about the land, the vineyards. The valley's reputation, he believes, is at risk. "There are all these traffic and environmental problems, and then people get pissed off at the wine business."

From Highway 29, Beckstoffer turns right on Walnut Lane and into the heart of To Kalon. It's just south of Mondavi and across the highway from Opus One. Twenty years after replanting the vineyard, he's doing it a second time, adjusting directions of rows and tinkering with the latest clones and rootstock. After the 2017 harvest, the company will start with an 11-acre plot along the highway. The goal is to finish replanting by 2028.

Because winemakers work with specific blocks in the vineyard, each will eventually lose grapes for a few vintages. Beckstoffer hopes to mitigate the pain by asking winemakers to share crop with their affected colleagues. What impact this will have on your favorite

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BONUS VIDEO Beckstoffer's To Kalon—Napa Cab Central: What makes the To Kalon vineyard so special? Andy Beckstoffer takes us on a tour of the famed vineyard, and winemakers Fred Schrader, Mike Hirby and Mark Carter talk about why they rely on Beckstoffer grapes. Watch the video at www.winespectator.com/061517.



Three of the five Beckstoffer siblings, above with their father at the company headquarters, work in the wine business. From left: David, COO of Beckstoffer Vineyards; Tuck, owner of several area wineries; and Kristin, a graphic designer of wine labels.

To Kalon bottling is hard to predict.

Looking west over the vineyards and toward the Mayacamas, Beckstoffer avows that To Kalon is a special place. "You could say OK, give me the soil type of To Kalon. Give me its longitude and latitude, where it sits, and I'm going to recreate To Kalon. You can't do that. It doesn't work that way," he says.

When he first arrived in Napa he thought vineyards were assets to be exploited, but now he sees things differently. His six historic vineyards are protected by conservation easements and have been preserved in a trust.

"These will be vineyards forever. They can never be sold by my children. I keep thinking that some spouse of a great-great-grandchild of mine is going to hate me, but that's what we want to do."

UPPING THE ANTE IN LAKE COUNTY

The road from Napa to Lake County winds through rugged mountains, dense forests and landscapes scarred by recent wildfires. It takes Andy Beckstoffer about 90 minutes to make the drive north from his office in Rutherford to his vineyards in the Red Hills American Viticultural Area (AVA), in the southern part of Lake County.

With new opportunities in Napa Valley growing scarce, Beckstoffer looked to this unproven region in the 1990s and was instrumental in getting the Red Hills AVA approved in 2004.

"Jess Jackson told me 'You can't grow good Cabernet in Lake County,' and I said 'Thanks, Jess, stay the hell out,'" Beckstoffer says with a laugh. Jackson's original winery was located in Lake County. "I don't disagree with him about Lake County as a whole, but Red Hills is different."

It's a matter of soil and elevation, Beckstoffer says. The AVA ranges from 1,350 to 2,600 feet, giving it a generally sunny but cooler mountain climate. The distinctive red soil is a product of the nearby dormant volcano, Mount Konociti, and the land is studded with black obsidian, quartz crystals and gravel. "It's the perfect soil for Cabernet," he points out.

The company has three vineyards in Red Hills: Amber Knolls, Amber Knolls West, and the newest, Crimson Ridge. Cabernet is the primary grape. As he tours the vineyards, Beckstoffer explains how he and son David manage the company. Operations in each of the three of counties where they have vineyards (Napa, Lake and Mendocino) function almost as distinct companies, with separate general managers and viticulturists.

"We basically let people run their own businesses within the company," David says. "Dad is very hands-on but he doesn't micromanage."

Beckstoffer believes that's the best way to grow grapes, saying, "I don't want to be just another Napa guy farming in Mendocino or Lake counties."

In all, Beckstoffer owns 20 vineyards in Napa, Mendocino and Lake, for a total of about 3,600 acres of vines.



Crimson Ridge Vineyard, in Lake County's Red Hills AVA, spans more than 500 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon.

"We're probably the third-largest land owner, behind Kendall-Jackson and Gallo," in California's North Coast, Beckstoffer says, "but we are by far the largest seller of grapes" in the region. Duckhorn, Franciscan, Hess, Joel Gott and Clos du Bois are among the producers that use his grapes in Napa Valley, North Coast and other regional bottlings.

Beckstoffer is convinced that Red Hills shows the same potential that Napa Valley did in the 1960s. But winemakers have been slow to buy into the idea. The AVA may be able to produce a good \$20 bottle of North Coast Cabernet, but will its wines ever be worthy of an \$80 or \$100 price tag?

"I can't tell people, 'These are great grapes.' If you don't make great wine, it's not a great vineyard," Beckstoffer concedes.

In 2016, he set about proving his theory, creating a contest of sorts. Ten winemakers are being given an acre each in Amber Knolls for three vintages. That's about 3.5 tons a year for each winemaker, free of charge, and 50 winemakers applied for a chance. It's no small undertaking for Beckstoffer: Lake County Cabernet grapes sell for nearly \$3,000 a ton.

"It's not a publicity stunt," says Beckstoffer, who declined to name the participating winemakers. "We think we have great grapes. We don't know if we can make great wine or not. The winemakers don't know yet."

—Tim Fish

STEVEN WITFIELD