

The Napa Legends Making Iconic Wines You Can Actually Buy

For decades, a famous ad campaign asked, “What Becomes a Legend Most?” Over the years, it featured stars like Judy Garland, Maria Callas, Marlene Dietrich, Elizabeth Taylor and Lauren Bacall. More recently, it showcased Janet Jackson and Gisele Bündchen. All were pop culture icons of their era, celebrated for their talent, charisma and longevity.

Wines also achieve legendary status for their quality, charisma and longevity. These are the opposite of cult bottlings. They connect through a good story that built greatness over time. They capture our imagination, ignite an air of aspiration and forge an emotional tie that’s about more than what’s in the glass. These are nine legends of the [Napa Valley](#).



Heitz Martha's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

This wine was born in the 1960s. Joe and Alice Heitz started **Heitz Cellars** in the eastern hills of **St. Helena**. In **Oakville**, Tom and Martha May also bought a vineyard, and the two couples became friends. The first vintage was made in 1966. The retail price was \$9.

Joe was thought of as a winemaker's winemaker, not a marketing powerhouse like his friend, **Robert Mondavi**. He came to California from Illinois, where his parents and grandparents made homemade wine for which young Joe would gather wild grapes. He went on to study enology at University of California, Davis.

After he worked at **Gallo** and **Beaulieu** with André Tchelistcheff, Joe took a job teaching at Fresno State and helped launch its enology department. Eventually, however, he couldn't resist starting a place of his own.

That place was along Highway 29, where a small Heitz tasting room still stands, alongside a tiny plot of Grignolino. The main Heitz property is east on Taplin Road, where a stone winery dates to the 1890s.

Joe was a trailblazer. His decision to make a 100% varietal **Cabernet Sauvignon** in the 1960s was unusual; most still made blends. He opted for French oak early on as well.

Joe died in 2000 at age 81. Alice and children David and Kathleen continued to run the winery after his passing, and the Gaylon Lawrence Jr. family owns it now.

"He was one of the first to grasp the single-vineyard concept, to recognize these wines were something very special," said **Warren Winiarski** of **Stag's Leap Wine Cellars** in Heitz's obituary in the *Napa Valley Register*.

The **2014 Martha's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (100 points; \$275)** spent three years in 100% French oak, one year in neutral oak and 12 additional months in bottle before release. It has years to go to unfurl its core of eucalyptus, mint and cedar, signature touchstones of the wine.