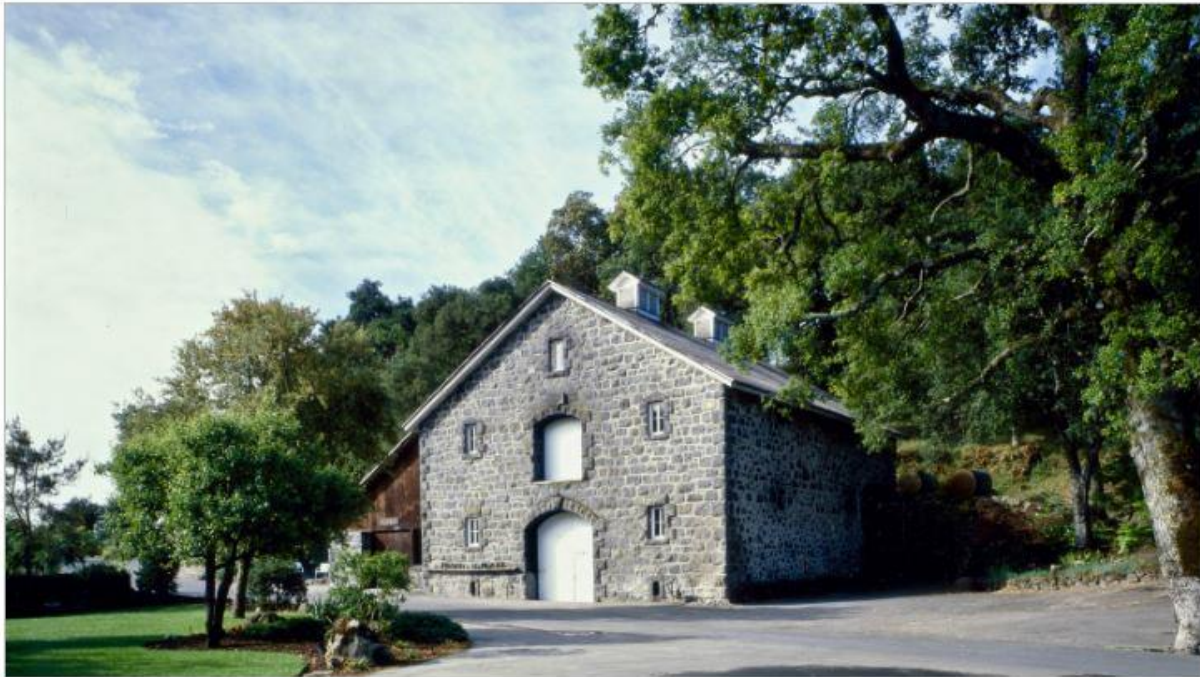


Iconic Napa Valley Winery Heitz Cellars Sold

The historic brand was purchased by Gaylon Lawrence Jr., whose family owns farmland in multiple states



Heitz' stone winery is a Napa landmark.

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The owners of [Heitz Cellars](#), one of the dominant producers in Napa Valley during its formative years, a champion of single-vineyard expressions and creator of one of Napa's most distinctive and collectible wines, the Cabernet Sauvignon [Martha's Vineyard](#), have sold the winery to Gaylon Lawrence Jr. The sale includes more than 400 acres of vineyards. The purchase price was not disclosed.

"We feel this is the right time for us to pass this rich legacy to another family," said Kathleen Heitz-Myers. "When we met with Gaylon, it seemed a perfect match. In the wine business we are all farmers, and with the Lawrence family's history in agriculture, we feel Heitz Cellars will be in good hands."

Lawrence is new to the world of wine, but not agriculture. His family owns farmland in Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi and Florida, where they own one of the state's largest citrus grove operations. The family also owns dozens of local banks, and hold a stake in one of the country's largest privately owned heating, ventilation and air-conditioning distributors. The Lawrences are based in Memphis, Tenn.

Joe Heitz [founded Heitz Cellars](#) in 1961; a native of Princeton, Ill., he came to California in the 1940s while serving in the Army Air Corps. He worked for Gallo and Beaulieu Vineyard in Napa Valley under André Tchelistcheff before starting his own brand.

Heitz died in 2000 at the age of 81. By that point [his children had taken over operations](#), David Heitz as winemaker and Kathleen Heitz-Meyers as chief operating officer.

Lawrence has appointed wine industry veteran Robert Boyd, who has previously worked with Kendall-Jackson and Joseph Phelps Vineyards, as the new president and CEO of Heitz. Boyd says that bottlings, vineyard sources, the current 40,000-case production and the winemaking team—minus David Heitz, who will be stepping aside—are expected to remain in place.

"There's no desire to change what we're doing from a winemaking perspective," Boyd told *Wine Spectator*. "There are no plans to make stylistic changes." They hope to maintain current contracts with vineyards, including Martha's Vineyard.

"The May family is excited about working with the Lawrence family," Laura May Everett, whose family owns Martha's Vineyard, told *Wine Spectator*. "We are looking forward to making more vintages of Heitz Martha's in the future and have no plans to change our goal of producing the highest quality organic Cabernet Sauvignon grapes possible."

Boyd added that the fact this is a family-to-family transaction will make it easier to keep the original focus in place. Gaylon Lawrence's daughter Westin lives in Napa and will become involved in the business. Boyd said that the goal is not to change, increase production or grow the business. "That's not the case here. We're looking at a long-term family involvement."

Boyd explained that the Lawrence family had been looking to get involved in the wine business for some time. "Hopefully [this purchase] is the first of many," he said.

<http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/Napa-Valley-Winery-Heitz-Cellars-Sold>