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The History of California Wine

Winemaking in California began more than 240 years ago. In 1769, Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary, brought settlers from Mexico into San Diego. He established a mission there and the first known vineyard in California. As he moved north along the route that became known as El Camino Real, he and others established 21 missions linking San Diego in the south to Sonoma in the north. To each, Father Serra brought the cultivation of the grape. The first wines were produced for sacramental purposes and the daily table needs of the missions. The grape variety planted came with the missionaries from Mexico and was known as the Mission grape.

About 1830, the commercial era started through the efforts of a Frenchman, Jean Louis Vignes. Arriving from Bordeaux, he saw the land's potential and soon imported cuttings of many varieties of the native European *Vitis vinifera*. His vineyard was located in what is now downtown Los Angeles. Shortly thereafter, a group of German Utopians started a large vineyard in Anaheim, now home to the world-famous Disneyland. In 1848, the discovery of gold forever changed the northern half of California. With it came a tremendous increase in population, wealth and settlements. Among those attracted to the pursuit of gold were many immigrants from France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and other countries. A few struck it rich. Many of those who did not, especially the Europeans, knew much about growing grapes and making wine, and realized that the land offered unlimited potential for vineyards.

Between 1860 and 1880, the industry grew rapidly as numerous wineries were established. The fact that the quality of California wines improved during this period is generally attributed to Count Agoston Haraszthy who brought many vine cuttings back to California from his trips to Europe. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad system in 1869, California wines were soon well represented in the eastern United States and in many European countries. Around 1880, the University of California established a major research center in Berkeley and experimental vineyard plots in many areas of the state. This development evolved into the now famous Department of Viticulture and Enology at the University of California at Davis.

By 1890, the industry was producing more than 10.9 million cases of wine per year. Additional cuttings were imported from Europe to supply the increasing number of vineyards. At the Paris Exhibition in 1890, nearly half of the California wines entered earned gold medals. During this period the vine pest phylloxera appeared in California. By the turn of the century it had ravaged many vineyards. Old vineyards were uprooted and new ones planted with *Vinifera* varieties that had been grafted to American rootstock, which was immune.

A more devastating blow to the California wine industry was the adoption of Prohibition in 1919, which banned the production and sales of alcoholic beverages. Having rebounded from phylloxera, winemaking virtually ceased until Prohibition was repealed in 1933. A few producers had remained in operation making sacramental wines, but most vineyards were either removed

or replanted with table grapes or thick-skinned varieties that could be shipped great distances from home winemaking, which was still allowed.

After the repeal of Prohibition, the wine industry faced the arduous task of rebuilding from scratch. The Wine Institute of California was established in 1934 to support these efforts. Before then, progress was slowed by the Great Depression and then World War II. Back on its feet in 1949, the industry produced more than 49.2 million cases. Growth was steady through 1960, when the annual output was 54.3 million cases. Expansion and redirection highlighted the California wine industry during the 1960s.

Although California has been harvesting grapes since the 18th century, the Golden State really became a global winemaking celebrity in 1976. That year California wines entered the infamous Judgment of Paris blind wine tasting competition, surprising the wine world by beating French wines in both red and white wine categories.

In the 1970s, production and sales of California wines reached record levels. To meet growing demand, new vineyards were planted. Between 1960 and the present, total vineyard land increased from 100,000 acres (40,500 hectares) to more than 535,000 acres (216,700 hectares) and the number of wineries grew from 227 in 1966 to well over 3,400 in 2010, shipping 242 million cases to the U.S. and abroad. European wineries and winemakers offered their own form of flattery by purchasing vineyard land and joining the California wine industry. Vintners from France, Germany, Italy, Spain and many other countries are now part of California's wine industry.

International acceptance and recognition followed national success. Exports began to increase significantly for the first time since 1900. They doubled in seven successive years during the late 1940s and early 1980s. In 2011, exports reached a record \$1.39 billion in winery revenues and 50.6 million nine-liter cases.

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