



Chateau Montelena

The Judgement of Paris and Founding of Napa Valley Wine

History: Chateau Montelena Winery, originally called A.L. Tubbs winery after its founder Alfred Tubbs, was constructed in 1888 and intended as a barrel-aging facility. The Chateau was unique in materials, plan, size, and style for its era. In nineteenth-century Napa Valley, the majority of wineries were constructed of wood. Instead, the Chateau is made of stone with walls three to twelve feet thick, which provides natural insulation against outside heat or cold. Similarly, the structure built into a hillside, to further regulate temperature - something necessary for producing quality wines but uncommon at the time. Also rare among Napa Valley wineries, the Chateau resembles an English Gothic castle gatehouse complete with rusticated stone walls, battlement with crenels and merlons, narrow arched windows, large arched door in the place of a portcullis, and bartizans with faux arrow slits. Accounts suggest the design was inspired by the Cellar of Chateau Lafite in France.

The renaissance of the winery, under the leadership of James Barrett, began in 1972 with the replanting of the Estate vineyard. In 1976, Chateau Montelena put California at the forefront of the wine world. Pitted against four White Burgundies and six California Chardonnays, Chateau Montelena's 1973 Chardonnay was rated the best by a team of who's-who of the French wine and food establishment at the Inter-Continental Hotel in Paris. This actualized the Chateau Montelena philosophy: "Make the best, period".

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