



## **ROBERT G. MONDAVI**

Robert Mondavi of Napa Valley was the global symbol of American wine and food. He founded the Robert Mondavi Winery in 1966, inspired by his belief that he could produce world-class wines in Napa Valley. Since that time, the Robert Mondavi Winery has become known as one of the world's leading innovators, producers and marketers of fine wine.

Born in Virginia, MN, to parents who emigrated from Sassoferrato in the Marche region of Italy, Robert was greatly influenced by Old World traditions of the pleasures of wine and food. The family moved to Lodi, CA, during Prohibition and he attended public schools there.

A 1936 graduate of Stanford University with a degree in economics and business administration, Robert understood that marketing was as critical as winemaking expertise in achieving success in the wine industry. He joined his father at Sunnyhill Winery in St. Helena. After convincing his father to purchase the Charles Krug Winery there, he upgraded the technology, determined to raise quality—a commitment which never faltered. His children, Michael, Marcia and Timothy, grew up at Krug.

At age 53, he established the Robert Mondavi Winery, the first major winery built in Napa Valley following the 1933 Repeal of Prohibition. Robert's goal was to combine European craft and tradition with the latest in American technology and use educational efforts to sell his wines.

At his fledgling winery—which he intended as an enduring landmark to California history, reflecting this in its iconic, mission-style architecture—Robert pioneered many fine winemaking techniques in California, including cold fermentation, stainless steel tanks and the use of French oak barrels. As a marketing leader, he initiated blind tastings of Napa Valley wines with other world-class wines, allowing consumers and the trade to evaluate wine quality and value. By the 1970s, Robert Mondavi wines were recognized for their quality internationally, and Robert pioneered the export of fine California wines.

Dedicated to fostering a wine culture in America, Robert also began holding tours and wine tastings. For four decades, the winery has celebrated the pleasures of wine, food and the arts; and provided creative settings for jazz and classical concerts, art exhibits and comprehensive cultural and culinary programs including the Great Chefs program, which has featured such luminaries as Julia Child, Paul Bocuse, Alice Waters and Joel Robuchon.

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Never one to rest on his laurels, in 1979, Robert joined forces with Baron Philippe de Rothschild, creating the Opus One Winery in Oakville. An immediate international success, Opus One created a world sales record for California with a \$24,000 case price at the first Napa Valley Wine Auction. He and his wife, Margrit, with local support, were founders of that auction, which is now recognized as the major wine auction in the U.S.

Robert also expanded his horizons through international partnerships with the Frescobaldi family in Italy and Eduardo Chadwick of Viña Errazuriz in Chile.

During the late 1980s, Robert launched the Mission Program to counteract anti-alcohol campaigns that were gathering force around the world. Supported by hundreds of wines, the Mission educated media, trade and consumers about the cultural and health benefits of moderate wine consumption. This program was the stimulus for CBS' "60 Minutes" program on wine and health, which changed America's view of wine.

In recent years, Robert became a major benefactor of cultural and educational institutions. Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts, a world-class pioneering cultural center, opened in 2001. With a history of extraordinary contributions to California's wine industry, Robert and his wife made a substantial personal gift in 2001 to the University of California, Davis to establish the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science and to name the campus' new Center for the Performing Arts, which opened in 2002.

An uncompromising perfectionist, Robert believed that if you wish to succeed, "...you must listen to yourself, to your own heart, and have the courage to go your own way." These and other lessons from his life are the subject of his autobiography, "Harvests of Joy," published in 1998 by Harcourt, Brace & Company. He has been honored by countless national and international institutions, including France's Legion of Honor (2005), the government of Italy and many U.S. institutions.

In March 2007, the Culinary Institute of America honored Robert Mondavi as the first "Pioneer" inductee in the founding year of their Vintners Hall of Fame. In August 2007, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced Robert Mondavi's induction into the California Hall of Fame at The California Museum for History, Women and the Arts.

Robert remained an active ambassador for the winery into his nineties, together with his wife, Margrit. He passed away peacefully at the age of 94.