



California Winegrowing Our History

California's winegrowing history goes back more than 200 years, and many California winegrowers come from families that have farmed grapes for several generations. Despite hurdles and setbacks including vine diseases, Prohibition and changing consumer taste, California winegrape growers have survived, persisted and grown to become one of America's most treasured success stories.

Pre-Gold Rush

The "Mission" variety of winegrape is introduced to California by Franciscan missionaries moving north into the territory.

1850's

Vitis vinifera (the botanical name for the grape-bearing vine that is responsible for most of the world's quality wines) winegrape varieties are brought in by a number of growers from Europe. Zinfandel comes to California.

1870's

Growers search for the optimum vineyard sites and growing regions in which to plant *Vitis vinifera*.

1870-1880's

Phylloxera (an aphid that kills grapevines by attacking their roots) in France destroys vineyards there and increases the viability and profitability of California's vineyards. Vineyard investment and winegrape acreage increases.

1890's

Major U.S. depression negatively impacts profitability of California's vineyards. Phylloxera destroys California's vineyards.

1900-1920's

Rootstocks (the root system of a grapevine to which the fruiting variety is grafted; primarily used to combat pests and diseases) are introduced and California vineyards are replanted.

1929-1933

Prohibition: the market for the commercial production of wine is eliminated. However, California winegrape acreage doubles as demand from home winemakers increases

sharply. Varieties planted are chosen by growers on the basis of tannin, color, and the ability to survive shipping to the East Coast.

1933-World War II

There is an oversupply of grape varieties planted during the 1920's and 30's.

World War II

Wine becomes the most easily available adult beverage. Winegrape prices increase. New vineyards are planted with higher quality varieties.

1970's

Modern wine boom begins. Winegrape acreage doubles. Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon become more common. New growing regions are discovered and planted. Demand for white wine increases.

1976

The 1976 Paris Tasting: two California wines, a Chardonnay and a Cabernet Sauvignon, definitively outrank their French counterparts in a blind tasting that shocks wine connoisseurs and changes opinions about California's wine all over the world.

1990's

Winegrape acreage expands statewide with state-of-the-art vineyards planted on sites selected specifically for optimum quality. An outbreak of Phylloxera speeds replanting, resulting in dramatically increased quality as new vineyard techniques and practices are adopted.

1991-1992

60 Minutes airs segment about the French Paradox. Demand for wine, particularly red wine, increases.

2000's

Building on major trends and successful regional efforts, the wine community joins together to create the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program. Participants establish voluntary high standards of sustainable practices to be followed by the entire wine community. The program leads to the adoption and attainment of higher and higher standards of environmentally-friendly farming practices.