



## Interview, Part 1: Wente Family Estates President Amy Hoopes

December 7, 2018



*Livermore, California-based Wente Family Estates has annual volume of about 650,000 cases in the U.S., excluding its private label production, with key brands including Wente Vineyards, Murrieta's Well, and Entwine. In recent years, the company has looked to premiumize with both price hikes and a focus on its higher-end single-vineyard wines. Company veteran Amy Hoopes was named president of the family-owned vintner in 2016. SND managing editor Daniel Marsteller recently met with Hoopes to get an update on Wente's progress.*



**SND:** How are overall conditions as the key holiday selling period heats up?

**Hoopes:** The \$15 area continues to do well across the industry, and we're seeing the same thing. That's where our estate wines sit. There's also a lot of growth happening at \$15-\$20, and the luxury tier at above \$20—where we have Murrieta's Well—has been phenomenal. We're seeing positive trends across the portfolio right now, but about 40% of the business gets done in these final three months, so we have to keep it going. Prior to this year, we took price in back-to-back years, which is a case of the Wente family recognizing the value of their estate vineyards, taking a long-term view, and ensuring that the wines are positioned in the right spot for the future. You're now starting to see a lot of brands move up in price across the industry, and the family made that move ahead of the pack.

**SND:** What's new in terms of your innovation agenda?

**Hoopes:** We recently launched a new brand called Ravel & Stitch. It's a single-SKU brand—Cabernet Sauvignon only—that sources from premier vineyards throughout the Central Coast appellation and has a suggested retail of \$30. It delivers a very different taste profile from other wines in the Wente portfolio. We initially produced 5,000 cases, launching at Safeway Albertsons, and the plan is to roll it out across the country mid-next year. We've seen a great response early on.

**SND:** What are you seeing in the on-premise arena?

**Hoopes:** Murrieta's Well has been doing fantastically in the on-premise. Both The Whip (white blend) and The Spur (red blend) are performing well. On the single-vineyard side, we have a storied history with Chardonnay, and that will always be a stronghold for us, but Charles Wetmore Cabernet has also had very good growth over the past two years, at a suggested retail of around \$35.

