



LIFESTYLE

California Dreamin'

by Doug Paulding

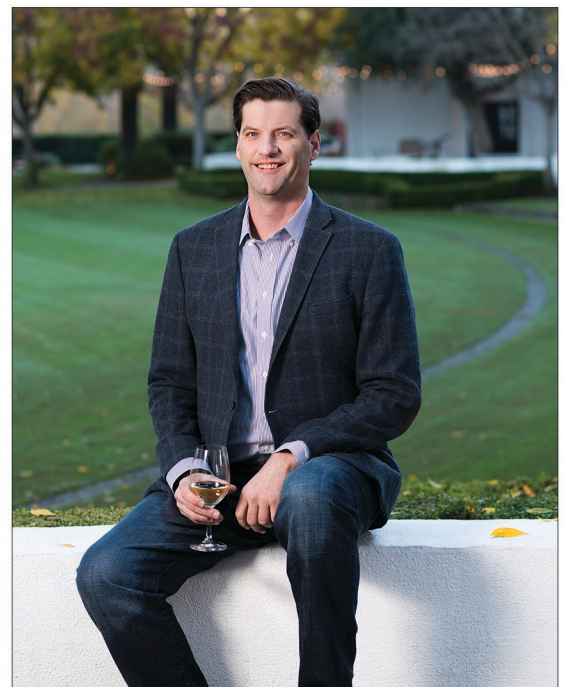
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There is never a shortage of surprises in the wine industry and I experienced a rather profound one recently. I received a media invite to meet some winemakers from Livermore Valley, California, over lunch at the wonderful Villanelle restaurant just south and west of Union Square in Manhattan. Livermore Valley wine country, just east of San Francisco, could be called one of the birthplaces of the California and, by extension, American wine world. Robert Livermore planted the first wine grapes in the region in 1846.

In 1883 **Carl H. Wente** and James Concannon founded the first wineries in the region and are both five generations in, producing great wines for the palate and the wallet.

Karl Wente told me his family's first vintage was in just after the Civil War and they have never missed a vintage of production since. Early on, the Wente family became known for Chardonnay and imported cuttings from Europe to establish their vineyards and today nearly 80 percent of all the Chardonnay vineyards in California trace their roots back to the Wente clone. They also brought in grape cuttings from Château Margaux in Bordeaux to establish Cabernet Sauvignon in Livermore.

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