



## Hank Wetzel

### Founder and Family Partner

Sonoma County's Alexander Valley was mostly prune orchards and pastures when Hank Wetzel's parents purchased a large portion of Cyrus Alexander's homestead in 1962. The family raised livestock, planted bountiful gardens and restored Alexander's original home continuing the tradition of family farming begun by the valley namesake in the 1840s. They Wetzel children grew up along with the vines as they developed the estate. Hank Wetzel knew early on that he wanted to make his life in the valley that his family loved.

He began working in the vineyards at an early age and graduated from the University of California - Davis in 1974 with a B.S. in Fermentation Science. For his senior project, he developed a plan for a small winery, which became the blueprint for AVV. As winery construction commenced in 1975, his wife Linda set up AVV's accounting system. They were the only employees at the time, so Linda also helped with the first harvest later that year. In the early days, Hank not only made the wine, he also handled sales. Crisscrossing the state in a blue van, the pair would stop at restaurants and wine shops, offering samples of those early releases and taking orders. The venture was a success and the wines won accolades from critics and wine drinkers across the country.

From the beginning Hank has focused on protecting the place they that he calls home. AVV's many "green" initiatives have been in use for decades. "Sustainable agriculture, for me, means taking care of the land and keeping it in its pristine state. And one of the reasons I want us to farm that way is because we actually live here on the property."

As Founder and a Family Partner at Alexander Valley Vineyards, Hank has held almost every position at the winery. Over the years, the winery expanded and more vineyards were planted. Forty two years later production has increased from 7,000 cases to over 180,000 cases and the wines are now sold in every state as well as China, Sweden, Canada and Japan. Through his leadership Alexander Valley Vineyards has brought recognition to the appellation, Sonoma County and California.

In recent years, Hank has transitioned much of the responsibility for the winery over to his sons Harry and Robert. Still an avid outdoorsman, Hank can often be found in his garden or duck hunting when he is not traveling the country, meeting with key accounts and promoting Alexander Valley Vineyards.



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