Carolyn Wente

Chairman Emeritus

Carolyn Wente is one of the driving forces behind Wente Family Estates' portfolio of wines' expansion and growth. She was instrumental in developing the Wente family's lifestyle business, which has brought Wente Family Vineyards worldwide renown and attracted visitors from around the globe. As Chairman Emeritus, Carolyn continues to secure an efficient transition, where the fifth and future generations take over a healthy and profitable business with seasoned, trained, and passionate leaders – both family and non-family members.

When Carolyn joined the business in 1980, the family was recognized for its leadership in viticulture and enology in the wine industry. That reputation served as a challenge to Carolyn as there was much more to accomplish with Wente Family Estates portfolio of wines.

The opening of the new Wente Family Vineyards Restaurant and Visitors Center in 1986 was the first step in the realization of her dream for a new appreciation of wine as a part of the culture in America. Bringing guests to the estate to enjoy wine country experiences with great wines, food and entertainment was integral to the family's vision of wine in everyday life. The Concerts at Wente Family Vineyards were initiated that summer, soon featuring world-renowned artists such as James Taylor, Elvis Costello, Sheryl Crow, Steve Martin and Diana Krall.

In 1998, the Wente family created an 18-hole championship golf course designed by Australian golfing great Greg Norman, which is beautifully located amid certified sustainable vineyards and offers exciting challenges to golfers; an unrivaled wine country destination for both wine and golf lovers to enjoy. Carolyn championed sustainable practices at the golf course to align with the family's commitment to sustainable vineyards. The course was awarded the "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" status in 2010, a distinguished accomplishment in the golfing world.

A recognized leader in wine, hospitality, and business, Carolyn is also a published author. She co-authored Sharing.the.Vineyard.Table and later The.Casual.Vineyard.Table, reflecting her passion for culinary arts and wine education.

Born and raised in California's Livermore Valley, Carolyn is a Stanford University graduate who studied in Europe and interned on Capitol Hill. Before returning to the winery, she worked as a financial analyst at Crocker Bank. She resides in Livermore Valley with her husband, Buck Layton.

Recent Awards:

- American Wine Legend Award, 2023 - Wine Enthusiast Wine Star Awards
- 2023 Global Honoree for Your Hour, Her Power™ - Dress for Success™ Worldwide
- Grande Dame Award from Les Dames d'Escoffier International's (LDEI), 2020
- Winery CEO of the Year 2019, North Bay Business Journal
- East Bay Business Times 10 Most Distinguished Women – General Excellence category 2018
- Honoree for Achievements as a Women in Business, 2016 – Dress For Success
- "20 Most Admired People in the North American Wine Industry" 2013 – Vineyard & Winery Management
- Women Leadership Award, 2012 – Girl Scouts of America
- American Winery of the Year Award, 2011 – Wine Enthusiast
- Women Who Could be President of the United States, 2009 – League of Women Voters
- World's Leading Women Entrepreneurs, 2002
- Women in Leadership Awards 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 – San Francisco Business Times
- Woman of the Year Award, 2000 – California State Assembly
- Outstanding Service Member Award 2000, 2006 – Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association
- Sales and Marketing Entrepreneur of the Year 2000 – Sales and Marketing Executives, San Francisco

Board Service:

- Executive Leadership Board, School of Viticulture and Enology, University of California, Davis, Board Member 2020 – present
- Academy of Art University, San Francisco; Board Member 2013 – present

- United States State Department, Fine Arts Committee, 2009 – present
- California Wine Institute – Board member, Past Chair