



GROTH'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE VINEYARDS, THE FAMILY & THE FUTURE

Napa Green Certified & Fish Friendly Farming Certified, 2014

Adopting and encouraging sustainable farming methods is hardly unique or new to Groth. A concern for sustainability has come to characterize the entire leading edge of the California wine industry, and the Groth family was at the forefront of its standardization.

The Groths realized early on that the future of their family's winery and prime Oakville vineyard is intimately tied to the future of the industry. During founder Dennis Groth's term as chairman of The Wine Institute, the organization established an industry-wide committee to establish the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices — a set of standards and a mechanism for self-assessment launched in 2002 that is now in use at hundreds of vineyards and wineries in California. From each individual vine to the wine industry as a whole, sustainability is the core concept and a commitment realized each and every day at Groth Vineyards & Winery.

Groth followed the comprehensive environmental certification program for vineyards and wineries in the Napa Valley and achieved Napa Green Certification in 2014. The program represents a soil-to-bottle approach to environmental stewardship and winemaking, integrating holistic practices at every step of the process. Independent, third-party certification makes Napa Green one of the most comprehensive environmental accreditations the wine industry offers. Groth is also Fish Friendly Farming certified, implementing a program for agricultural properties to restore fish and wildlife habitat and improve water quality.

“Elite winegrowing and sustainability go hand in hand,” says Director of Winegrowing Cameron Parry. “We want each incremental movement in the vineyard to promote health *and* increase expression of place — to show off our little piece of this world while preserving it for as long as we're here farming.” More often than not, the same practices that promote grape and wine quality also have an environmental payoff. For

example, when replanting vineyards, the row orientation changed from east-west to north-south, allowing breezes from the San Pablo Bay to flow more easily through the vineyards. Increased air circulation reduces mildew and rot on the vines and consequently reduces the need for fungicides — better for the wine, better for the environment.

Preserving natural resources is also a key element of sustainable farming, one step further than organic farming. Sustainable farming practices take into consideration effects on the whole environment and upon the health of the entire watershed of the Napa Valley. Reducing water use and using waste as compost to provide nutrients to the vines are all part of Groth's sustainable approach.

Encouraging cover crops is not a new sustainable practice, but tailoring the seed selection to each individual vineyard block and sub-block takes it to the next level. Mustards help control nematode populations, while other plants help increase soil structure or dry out water-holding clay soils. “By encouraging cover crops, we actually use less water, and we keep the tractor passes through the vineyards to a minimum. If you see weeds in the vineyards, it indicates smart farming and fewer chemicals,” says Parry.

Proper canopy management that lets more sunshine get to the grapes promotes riper flavors and also discourages the population of destructive insects, like leafhoppers, and reduces the need for pesticides. Adding owl boxes, raptor perches, and blue bird boxes to each property also lends a hand to control gophers and insects.

Planting an insectary created a welcoming environment for beneficial insects that can support grapevine health. The garden is planted with grasses and flowers that attract insects that help control the grapevine pests in the surrounding vineyards. Yarrow attracts ladybugs, a common predator of damaging leafhoppers, and California Lilac encourages the lacewing population that combats mealybugs that can spread mold and virus in the vineyard. The insectary is also home to beehives providing pollination for the flowers. “We’re creating a comprehensive, bio-diverse environment that is not just specific to the vines,” said Parry.

Preserving the land is not only good for the grapes; it's the key to sustaining the family-owned business and the prestige of the Oakville appellation for generations to come. Dennis and Judy are proud of what they have accomplished, and second-generation leader Suzanne Groth is determined to pass it on. “I'd like to think my kids could make great wine forever off this property,” says Suzanne.

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