



## HAGAFEN CELLARS

Leading the pack as California's first upscale Kosher winery, Hagafen Cellars produces a broad selection of internationally renowned wines from some of Napa Valley's best small vineyards.



Hagafen Cellars sources premium fruit from eight different vineyards in Napa Valley; Hagafen's premium wines are all Kosher and produced according to Jewish dietary laws; Owner/winemaker Ernie Weir founded Hagafen Cellars in 1979 with the intent to make first-rate wine in a niche that would make his brand distinctive; Hagafen Cellars is located in the heart of Napa Valley near the Stags Leap and Oak Knoll Districts.

It wasn't too long after Hagafen (pronounced Ha-gah-Fen) Cellars was founded that it received a call from the White House. The time was Ronald Reagan's first term in office and wine was needed for a dinner honoring then Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The winery complied and since then the kosher wines of Hagafen Cellars have graced White House tables and events numerous times.

Such honors come with being the first kosher winery established in California. That was in 1979, and the winery's first production was a mere 300 bottles. Today it has grown to an 8,000 case annual production and its wines have ranked amongst California's finest for several decades.

The word *Hagafen* is Jewish for 'the vine'. The winery's initial ownership group included Ernie Weir and his wife Irit, who later bought out all the existing partners when they decided to grow the winery to its present size.

Weir is originally from Los Angeles, where he attended UCLA and received a degree in sociology. He had experienced his initial exposure to viticulture while working on a kibbutz in Israel as a young man. It seemed only natural that he would one day pursue a career in the wine industry to feed his desire.

He enrolled at the heralded University of California Davis and later graduated with a degree in viticulture. Early in his career, he was fortunate to work with Domaine Chandon Napa Valley where he learned the fine art of making sparkling wine. This expertise carried over to Hagafen Cellars where Weir produces several types of sparkling wine. His Hagafen Cellars Brut was actually selected as the only wine served for President Barack Obama's 2010 Hanukkah party that was attended by numerous national and international celebrities and even members of the US Supreme Court.

Today's Hagafen Cellars occupies a total of twenty-one acres in Napa Valley, and sources from eight different vineyards in Napa Valley. A tiny tasting room completes the family-style setting where visitors can enjoy samples of Hagafen Cellars' award winning wines.

"We are located right down from the famous Stag's Leap Appellation and about 20 yards from the Oak Knoll District," Ernie Weir related. "Those are two of Napa's most productive growing areas. The grapes that we grow on our own vineyards are really first rate and account for about half of our production."

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Views of Hagafen Cellars' Napa Valley vineyards and winery property on Silverado Trail.

## ABOUT THE VINEYARD



Hagafen's 2011 Napa Valley Pinot Noir comes from the tiny Montington Vineyard in the up and coming Coombsville AVA. This southeastern corner of the Napa Valley is made up of gentle rolling hills and thin soils that are ideal for growing a wide variety of world-class grapes. Hagafen began

sourcing Montington Vineyard Pinot Noir in 2011 and with the great success of this vintage, will continue to use the vineyard for all

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Hagafen Cellars contracts the remainder of its grape needs from assorted growers around Napa Valley. The winery itself is set back off of the Silverado Trail in a natural setting that has been compared to a heartland farm. It maintains its identity and purpose by producing a wide assortment of wines for a growing customer base.

Weir has been quoted as saying that he interferes as little as possible with the soil and that he feels that factor creates a balance that minimizes the chemical and erosion impact by using modern farming techniques while maintaining the age-old wisdom of balance and the traditional values of conservation and land stewardship.

That said, it's also a fact that Hagafen Cellars produces some incredibly good wines and is particularly noted for its Cabernet and Pinot Noir.

Weir refers to his wines as being made in "old Napa style" that respects the lineage of the vineyards and employs only classic winemaking techniques. Newer, more modern winemaking approaches are not for the likes of Ernie Weir.

Weir is a sincere throwback to vintners of an earlier day. He has been repeatedly quoted as saying, "passion, soul and enjoyment – without all three, you don't have a fine wine."

While all of Hagafen Cellars' wines are kosher, Ernie Weir proudly points to the fact that almost 75% of his sales are to non-Jewish customers. While he has also consulted for a large number of Israeli wineries, his opinions and methods are considered well founded within the California wine community.

The fact that Hagafen Cellars is now approaching the 35-year mark in longevity speaks for itself. Only wineries that have provided exceptional wines and can provide remarkable resumes tend to last that long in today's competitive market. Hagafen Cellars is a tribute to a man who wanted to do his own thing in the wine industry in a manner in which he was truly comfortable. Time and the high accolades that have accompanied his wines have proven Ernie Weir accurate in his initial premise that if you make really good wines, people will purchase them.

of their Pinot Noir needs for the foreseeable future.

Coombsville itself is a bowl-shaped depression, cradled by the foothills of the Vacas Mountain Range and flanked by the town of Napa and the Napa River. Its cooler weather is moderated by its close proximity to San Pablo Bay, with fog covers settling more frequently and burning off later in the day than Napa's northern sub-appellations. Coombsville's daily temperatures can be as much as ten degrees cooler during the hot summer months, which helps preserve acidity levels and promotes an even ripening period - both of which are key factors in producing premium Pinot Noir fruit.

# ABOUT THE WINEMAKER



Since the founding of Hagafen Cellars in 1979, Ernie Weir has had daily involvement in the two sides of wine production: grape growing and winemaking. His close attention to detail from grape to glass has ensured the superb quality of Hagafen wines and the international critical acclaim his wines have garnered is a testament to his remarkable knowledge and skilled techniques as a winemaker.

Weir takes maximum advantage of the Napa Valley's geology and climate and produces a variety of wines from multiple sub-

appellations in the Valley. He interferes as little as possible to allow his Hagafen wines to be true representations of the appellations and vineyards from which they are from.

Ernie Weir is undeniably a pioneer in California's wine industry, opening the first kosher winery in the state and having multiple wines grace the tables of The White House.

Weir has been quoted as saying, "As a Jew, I thought it was important to produce a first-rate kosher wine. As a small producer, I looked for a niche that would make me unique and that would separate me from the 300 other wineries in the area." Now, nearly thirty-five years since Hagafen opened its doors, it seems Ernie Weir has achieved just that.

# HAGAFEN 2011 NAPA VALLEY PINOT NOIR

Hagafen's 2011 Napa Valley Pinot Noir comes from the region's newer Coombsville AVA, located in the southeastern corner of the Valley. This bright and lively Pinot jumps out of the glass with aromas of juicy cranberry and lush strawberry. The bouquet expands with a spicy toastiness and subtle hints of clove and cinnamon. On the palate, the nuances of bright cranberries and strawberries is expanded and enhanced with soft tannins and a lush full mouth feel. A deliciously complex wine and an excellent example of Coombsville Pinot Noir. Try pairing the Hagafen 2011 Pinot Noir with the winery's own recipe of Wild Mushroom and Arugula Risotto (see backside of newsletter).

Alcohol: 13.9% Total Acidity: 0.62 g/100mL  
pH: 3.63 Enjoy Now Until: 2015



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### Wild Mushroom and Arugula Risotto

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|---|--|
| 1 1/2 cups (1 oz.) dried mushrooms, rehydrated and chopped, plus 3/4 cup soaking liquid | 1 1/2 cups Arborio rice                                  |
| 5 cups vegetable broth  | 1/2 cup dry sherry                                       |
| 4 Tbs. unsalted butter  | 3 oz. baby arugula (4 cups, loosely packed)              |
| 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced (about 1 cup)                                       | 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Grana Padano |
| Kosher salt   | 1/3 cup sliced chives                                    |
|   | Freshly ground black pepper                              |

Heat the mushroom soaking liquid with the vegetable broth in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Meanwhile, in a large (4-quart) pot, melt 2 Tbs. butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sprinkle with 1/2 tsp. salt. Cook the onion, stirring, until it softens and turns a light brown, about 3 minutes. Add the rice and mushrooms and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the sherry; raise the heat to high, and cook, stirring, until it almost completely reduces, about 1 minute.

Reduce the heat to medium; add 3/4 cup of the broth to the rice, and cook, stirring often, until the rice absorbs the broth, 2 to 3 minutes. Add another 3/4 cup of broth and cook until absorbed. Continue adding broth in this manner until the rice is creamy and tender, about 20 minutes total - you may or may not need all of the broth. Stir in the arugula, Parmigiano, all but a couple Tbs. of the chives, and the remaining 2 Tbs. butter and continue stirring until the arugula is just wilted, about 1 min. Serve immediately in individual bowls, sprinkled with a few grinds of black pepper and the remaining chives. *Recipe sourced from Hagafen Cellars.*



### Rosemary-Rubbed Rib-Eye with Charred Red Onions

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| 2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. olive oil         | Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper                                 |
| 4 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary | 2 (12-oz.) boneless rib-eye steaks, about 1-inch thick, at room temperature |
| 1 tsp. dry mustard                   | 1 large red onion, cut into 1/3-inch-thick slices                           |
| 1/2 tsp. garlic powder               |   |

In a small bowl, combine 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, the rosemary, dry mustard, garlic powder, 2 tsp. salt and 1 tsp. pepper to make a paste. Rub onto both sides of the steaks.

Position a rack about 4 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler on high. Heat a broiler-safe cast-iron grill pan or skillet on the stove top over medium-high heat until searingly hot (at least 5-15 min.). Put the steaks in the hot pan and transfer to the broiler. Broil about 2 min. per side for medium-rare (130 degrees), or until they reach your desired degree of doneness. Transfer to a cutting board, tent with foil, and let rest.

Brush the tops of the onion slices with the remaining 1 tsp. olive oil and season lightly with salt and pepper. Put in the pan, oiled side up, and broil until lightly charred, about 4 min. With tongs, separate the onions into rings, toss, and continue broiling until crisp-tender and deeply charred, about 4 min. more. Slice the steaks if you like, and serve with the onions. *Recipe sourced from FineCooking.com.*

*Find this recipe and all of your favorites online at [GoldMedalWineClub.com/recipes](http://GoldMedalWineClub.com/recipes). We have a delicious collection of entrée recipes to pair with your favorite Gold Medal wines!*



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