



A Vintage Heritage

An Interview with John Concannon,
4th Generation Vintner, Concannon Vineyard



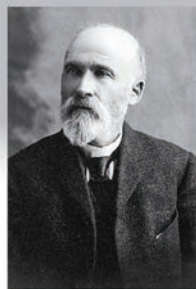
2010 Reserve Mother Vine Cabernet Sauvignon (left);
Concannon Vineyards tasting room (above); four generations of Concannon vintners (below)

EDITOR'S NOTE John Concannon was raised in the same home that his great-grandfather, James Concannon, built upon the Concannon Vineyard estate when founded in 1883. From his earliest years, John began learning and working every facet of the family business, including vineyard management and winemaking for crafting their award-winning wines. Following his passion for science and technology, he successfully distinguished himself in the medical field for 23 years, during which time he expanded his skills and experience in business management and ownership. Now a leader in Concannon Vineyard's senior management and on its winemaking teams, John travels the country speaking on behalf of the winery and the California wine industry.

COMPANY BRIEF Concannon Vineyard (www.concannonvineyard.com) is America's oldest, continuously operating winery under the same family label and stewardship. Founded in 1883, James Concannon not only established the first successful winery founded by an Irish immigrant, but also established Concannon as a Founding Family of the California wine industry. Concannon Vineyard's four generations have made many pioneering contributions, which include the famous Concannon Cabernet Clones 7, 8, and 11 – currently the most widely planted Cabernet Sauvignon clones in California – as well as the introduction of "America's First Petite Sirah®." Located in the historic Livermore Valley, Concannon Vineyard was first to place its vineyard into the Tri-Valley Conservancy Land Trust, and was one of the first to become Certified Sustainable by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance.

Is it difficult to differentiate in this crowded space?

Because Concannon Vineyard is a brick-and-mortar brand with a family connection, we are fortunate in that we are already inherently differentiated by our unique family history and distinctive winemaking legacy over the past 130 years. I truly believe that ultimately people relate best to other people and, in sharing our



FOUNDER
James Concannon



2ND GENERATION
Joe Concannon



3RD GENERATION
Jim Concannon



4TH GENERATION
John Concannon

family stories, values, and accomplishments, we are able to make a more personal connection with the customer. Our hope is that our family story, along with our commitment to integrity and innovation in every aspect of our business, will not only give our wine a distinctive "face" among other labels but, most importantly, that we will continually earn the trust of customers.

How have you maintained consistent quality while offering the wines at a fair price point?

First, we offer different wine tiers with the goal of crafting award-winning wines of exceptional value within each price point. Second, we have a driving desire to maximize efficiency in our vine-to-wine process with the result being increasing quality and decreasing cost. For us, it's all about the care we take to give our customers a great wine experience.

How critical has it been to remain innovative over the years?

Being innovative is not only critical to our long-term success, but is also definitive of who we are as a family and a business. This started with my great-grandfather, James Concannon, who was one of the first to craft Bordeaux-style wines in California, as well as among the first to import the highest quality vines directly from Bordeaux, including from renowned Château d'Yquem, Château Margaux, and Château Lafite.

This same visionary entrepreneurialism has led to many other contributions to the wine industry, the most significant being the "Concannon Cabernet Clones." These clones resulted from the collaborative work between my father, Jim, and UC Davis, and they became essential to the enormous expansion of Cabernet plantings in California and Napa Valley from the 1970s to the present, play a key role in helping California Cabernet achieve

international recognition. They are the most popular and widely planted Cabernet Sauvignon clones in California.

Do you look at the winery as a destination?

Winery visits are the second largest tourist industry in California for good reason. Most people love spending time in these dynamic landscapes, as there is the romance of the vines

and an enjoyment of wine, food, and nature, which no other experience can duplicate. At our landmark estate and winery, we provide the Concannon Experience, which includes opportunities to enjoy premium Tours & Tastings, our award-winning wine bar for delicious food and wine pairings, and time spent relaxing on our beautiful lawn and in our garden areas, surrounded by stunning vistas and vineyard acreage.

Are there opportunities to broaden into additional varietals?

We are always looking to determine which varieties offer the best expression of flavors within our terroir that should be included in our overall portfolio. Moreover, we also continually work with these varieties in crafting outstanding red and white blends.

As the brand has grown, how critical has it been to maintain the family culture?

As 4th generation, I think of innovation as preserving the past while engaging the future. Therefore, our family culture will always be a driving force for our brand, as our winemaking is inextricably linked to our family values of integrity, excellence, and respect for the land. This is all required within the Concannon name which, translated from ancient Gaelic, means "Wisdom Without Compromise." For me, this has meant pursuing the best technologies for improving and expanding vineyard and winery operations, as well as the best implementation of sustainable practices in environmental conservancy. Now there is even more life in our soil, resulting in wines with higher fruit intensity, complexity, balance, and structure. In communicating our wines to the public, it comes down to the feeling you give off. We have made some significant contributions to the wine industry, and I want to preserve that history while continuing to pave the way into the future. ●