

## A Commitment To Quality

### Napa Valley's Cakebread Expands With National Launch Of Bezel Brand

An Interview with Mike Jaeger, President and Chief Executive Officer, Cakebread Cellars

**EDITORS' NOTE** Mike Jaeger is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Cakebread Cellars. He has held executive positions at several top tier wine companies (Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Trinchero Family Estates, Constellation Brands) and worked with some of the most respected brands in the world including Mumm Napa Valley, Sterling Vineyards, Charles Krug, Kim Crawford, and Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. Prior to joining Cakebread Cellars in 2018, he served as CEO at C. Mondavi & Family.



Mike Jaeger

Jaeger's experience spans all major wine categories, price points (economy to ultra-premium), and growing regions (California, Washington, Oregon, France, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, South America and South Africa). Jaeger earned a BS degree in business administration and marketing from California State University, Chico.

**WINERY BRIEF** Since its founding in 1973, Cakebread Cellars ([cakebread.com](http://cakebread.com)) has been famous for its warm, gracious hospitality and unmatched wines. With over 50 harvests under their belt, the family winery has become one of the most successful and respected wineries in America, renowned for its world-class vineyards, wines, and hospitality. In 2023, Cakebread expanded its legacy with the launch of Bezel, bringing its craftsmanship to California's Central Coast with a modern collection of vibrant, fruit-driven wines designed for effortless enjoyment. Bezel is available in select markets now, with a nationwide launch planned for 2025.

#### Will you discuss the history of Cakebread Cellars?

Cakebread Cellars started as a true family venture. Jack and Dolores Cakebread founded the winery in 1973 after a chance opportunity to purchase land in Napa Valley while Jack was on a photography assignment. From the beginning, their focus was on quality, hospitality, and building something meaningful that could be passed down through generations. Their vision has been carried forward by their sons, Bruce and Dennis Cakebread, who have honored this vision and continued to guide the winery with the same family-first dedication. Still family-owned and operated, the winery has grown into one of Napa's most respected wineries, building on its reputation for producing world-class wines and creating a welcoming, memorable experience for our guests.

#### How important has it been for Cakebread Cellars to maintain a family culture as it has grown over the past 50 years?

It's been essential. Maintaining a family-first culture has remained at the core of everything we do as we've expanded. Jack and Dolores Cakebread believed that great wine should bring people together and that philosophy continues to guide Cakebread today. Their stewardship ensures that our winemaking, hospitality and business strategy all remain rooted in those same

principles – from how we care for our vineyards to the experiences we create for our guests.

One of the biggest advantages of this culture has been the loyalty and dedication of our team, many of whom have been with us for decades. That sense of continuity has not only preserved our traditions, but also allowed us to evolve thoughtfully, driving initiatives like the launch of Bezel. This family culture is especially apparent in our culinary program which was established on the Cakebread family's principles and is now fostered by 35-year veteran Chef Brian Streeter. As we grow,

we remain committed to honoring our roots while embracing new opportunities that reflect the principles that have defined us since 1973.

#### Will you provide an overview of Cakebread's offerings?

We produce a range of wines, but we're probably best known for our Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Noir. We make 18 wines, including estate-grown bottlings, single-vineyard selections and our Reserve series. Each wine reflects our commitment to balance, elegance, and food-friendliness, which has been a cornerstone of Cakebread since the beginning. Beyond our Napa Valley wines, the Cakebread portfolio now includes Bezel and Mullan Road Cellars, two brands that build on our family's winemaking legacy. Bezel, sourced from California's Central Coast, brings the same craftsmanship to a fresh, fruit-forward style, perfect for more everyday occasions. Mullan Road Cellars, based in Washington's Royal Slope AVA, offers a bold, structured expression of Cabernet Sauvignon that highlights the region's unique terroir. Together, these brands allow us to explore new regions and styles while staying true to our heritage of exceptional quality and thoughtful winemaking.



Cakebread's recently launched Bezel, a vibrant, fruit-driven wine





*Cakebread Cellars uses concrete egg-shaped fermentation tanks in their fermentation hall*

**What have been the keys to the strength and leadership of Cakebread Cellars for over five decades?**

First and foremost, consistency. From our commitment to quality to the strong relationships we've built with growers and customers, we've always focused on the long game. But for Cakebread, that doesn't mean looking 10 years ahead; it means thinking about the future. When we acquire vineyards or make decisions about vineyard management, we do it with the next generation in mind, ensuring that the land remains healthy and productive for decades. As a leader, I honor and build upon that foundation while continuing to evolve the business and position it for future success. That means looking for new opportunities, whether it's introducing brands like Bezel or strengthening our customer relationships – while staying true to the brand's core values.

**Will you discuss Cakebread Cellars' commitment to sustainability?**

Sustainability has always been at the heart of Cakebread Cellars and remains that way today. We're proud to be part of the International Wineries for Climate Action (IWCA), an organization dedicated to reducing carbon emissions and driving sustainability forward in the wine industry. As part of our long-term goals, we're working toward carbon neutrality and increasing our use of renewable energy, while also focusing on soil health through methods like composting which are championed by Bruce Cakebread to ensure the longevity of our vineyards and surrounding ecosystem.

We apply that same commitment to Bezel, and all of its vineyards are SIP Certified (Sustainability in Practice), which ensures responsible vineyard management and environmental stewardship. Across our portfolio, we remain focused on thoughtful approaches that help preserve the land for future generations.

**What was the vision for the launch of Bezel, and how does Bezel fit into Cakebread's long-term vision?**

Bezel was created to bring the Cakebread family's winemaking expertise to a new audience, offering high-quality, expressive wines at a more affordable price point. Over the past five years, we've studied consumer trends, trade needs, and market opportunities, and it became clear that there was demand for wines that maintain the trust and tradition of excellence found at Cakebread but are designed for more casual, everyday occasions.

Bezel is a natural evolution of the Cakebread portfolio, crafted for a younger, modern wine drinker who values fresh, fruit-forward wines that are easy to enjoy. While Cakebread Cellars is deeply rooted in Napa Valley and fine dining, Bezel offers a more accessible, retail-friendly option, making it

easier than ever to bring Cakebread family wines into weeknight dinners, get-togethers and relaxed celebrations. Looking ahead, Bezel strengthens the Cakebread family's presence beyond Napa Valley. It will enable us to introduce new consumers to our winemaking philosophy while maintaining the same commitment to quality and authenticity that has driven our efforts for more than 50 years.

**Why did you feel the Central Coast was the next step for Cakebread Cellars?**

The Central Coast was the ideal choice for Bezel because it allows us to explore a different expression of California winemaking while maintaining the same quality and time-honored techniques that define Cakebread. Paso Robles and the emerging SLO Coast offer incredible diversity in microclimates and vineyard sites, allowing us to create vibrant, fruit-forward wines with freshness and balance. This move was also driven by how today's consumers engage with wine. There is a growing demand for high-quality, yet approachable wines designed for more relaxed, everyday occasions. By expanding to the Central Coast it allows us to offer something new without compromising on what has made Cakebread successful for decades – a dedication to excellence, authenticity, and wines that bring people together.

**What has made the wine industry so special for you?**

It's hard to believe, but my journey in this incredible industry began all the way back in 1987 – almost 40 years ago (though I'm not sure I've aged better than some of the bottles I've opened). Along the way, I've had the privilege of working with amazing companies, even better people and, of course, enjoying some truly exceptional wines. I have to admit, at the end of a meal with friends, it's not uncommon for someone to sigh and say, "I wish I had your job." And without missing a beat, I always smile and reply, "Trust me, I'm living the dream for both of us!" ●



*Cakebread Cellars Visitor Center*