

EST.  1976

# DUCKHORN®

## PORTFOLIO

### DANIEL J. DUCKHORN

*Founder & Board Member - Duckhorn Portfolio*



Over the course of four decades, Dan Duckhorn has been a leader in the Napa Valley wine community. A native of northern California, Dan earned his masters in business administration in 1962 from the University of California at Berkeley. Over the next decade, Dan held managerial positions with Matson Navigation Company, Adpac Computing Languages Company and Crocker Associates before becoming president of Vineyard Consulting Corporation (VCC) in 1971.

As a major vineyard technical services company, VCC was deeply involved in viticulture consulting, vineyard management and grapevine propagation. It was here that Dan learned about winegrowing from the soil up and

honed his abilities for assessing vineyard sites and pairing varietals with their most suitable terroir. While at VCC, Dan began to see that a dramatic change was coming to the North Coast, with a gradual shift away from common varietals toward higher quality varietal wines, led by different clones and rootstocks planted in more favorable locals and on more advanced trellis systems.

In 1976, Dan and his then wife Margaret co-founded Duckhorn Vineyards with a small group of friends. Influenced by what he had learned on a journey to France, Dan decided that the Napa Valley was ideal for producing wines of uncommon depth, complexity character. In the beginning, he made the pioneering decision to focus his passion and resources on the production of a world-class Napa Valley Merlot. Though many other wineries were using Merlot as a blending grape, Dan encouraged his staff to develop a premium stand-alone Napa Valley Merlot.

The first Duckhorn Vineyards harvest in 1978 consisted of 1,600 cases in two bottlings—800 Three Palms Vineyard Merlot and 800 Cabernet Sauvignon. Proving Dan’s belief that great wines begin in the vineyard, 1978 turned out to be an excellent first vintage partly due to a wonderful growing season. “It was a great year,” says Dan. “We could have made wine out of walnuts.”

If a certain degree of luck helped out that first year, under Dan’s leadership the winery has spent over 35 years proving that Duckhorn’s commitment to quality and excellence is real. In 1988, Dan began leading Duckhorn through a period of careful growth. With his meticulous selection of vineyard properties, Dan has worked to create an estate program that guarantees Duckhorn a continuous supply of the finest fruit. In addition, Dan has diversified Duckhorn Vineyards’ parent company, the Duckhorn Portfolio, to include Paraduxx, Goldeneye, Migration and an expanded Decoy line.

Dubbed “Mr. Merlot” by Frank Prial of the *New York Times*, Dan is a highly respected leader in the wine industry. Active in the wine community, Dan has served on the board of directors of the Wine Institute, the American Vintners Association and Family Winemakers of California. He was president of the Napa Valley Vintners Association and the Wine Service Co-op and is a past chair of the Napa Valley Wine Auction. Dan’s vision and guidance were instrumental in founding the Premiere Napa Valley Trade Barrel Auction. In 2005, Johnson & Wales University awarded Dan the Degree of Doctor of Oenology Honoris Causa and UC Davis has recognized he and Margaret as Wine Industry Pioneers.