

# American Vineyard



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# CAWG Honors Kautz Farms as Grower of the Year

*Lodi family vineyard recognized for its innovation and leadership*

The California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) presented its Grower of the Year award to Kautz Farms, of Lodi. The award is the highest honor given by CAWG and is bestowed to an individual, family or company "who represents an outstanding example of excellence in viticulture and management, and is recognized by others for innovation and leadership within the industry."

"John Kautz and his family are true leaders in the agricultural community," said Bill Pauli, CAWG chair. "Kautz Farms' resourcefulness, innovation and passion for farming and agriculture, have changed the Lodi area into a major wine region."



The Kautz family's agricultural roots began in Russia, from where John's German grandparents emigrated. They settled and farmed in Nebraska where they milked cows and raised all their own food, except flour and sugar. In the 1920s, they left Nebraska and moved west to the Lodi area.

Following the death of his father in 1952, John Kautz took over the family's 38 acre farm. Lacking a college education, John persevered and learned all aspects of farming from family and friends. During the next 20 years, John and his family farmed a wide variety of crops including tomatoes, bell peppers, apples, beans, corn, cucumbers, sugar beets, and hay. Their success as farmers would be recognized in 1965 when John, and his wife Gail, received the nation's

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Outstanding Young Farmer award.

In the 1970s, Kautz shifted his focus from farming row crops to orchards and vineyards, with plantings of Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. Over the next 30 years, the Kautz farming operation would replace all row crop acreage with winegrapes. Today, Kautz oversees 7,500 acres of winegrapes and stone fruits. He serves as Chairman of Kautz Family Vineyards, which includes the Ironstone Winery and Entertainment Complex and John Kautz Farms. His four children own and operate Bear Creek Winery and California Hotwood.

"John Kautz has been one of the most significant growers in California's agricultural history," said Jeryl Fry, Jr., president of Mohr-Fry Ranches. "The process of growing from a small family farm to a very impressive and large family farming operation is, in itself, a great demonstration of entrepreneurship, agricultural prowess, sense of community, and family devotion."

Family devotion and participation is evident in every aspect of the Kautz Farms' operation. John and Gail's four children are involved in the family business, with son Stephen serving as President of Ironstone Winery and marketing the family's wines throughout the U.S., son Kurt as Kautz Farms' Chief Financial Officer and manager of Bear Creek Winery and California Hotwood, son Jack serving as Director of Ironstone Winery, and daughter Joan starting and serving as Vice President of International Operations for the family's wine portfolio.

"The family dynamic of their operation even extends to their employees, many of whom have been employed by Kautz Farms for as long as 50 years," said Edward Van Diemen, president of the Lodi District Grape Growers Association, Inc.

Growers close to Kautz regard his willingness to take risks for keeping him on the successful leading edge of the winegrape growing business. For example, in 1973 he was the first to plant Chardonnay wine grapes in Lodi and, today, his growing area leads the state in Chardonnay production.

Kautz Farms also implemented Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in the early 1970s, and sustainable practices in their vineyards including the use of

cover crops and compost, owl boxes and raptor perches, and riparian habitat restoration. Additionally, Kautz Farms received a California waterfowl award for hatching more than 1,000 wood ducks in a year.

Recognizing the need to protect and advocate for the agriculture industry and, especially winegrape growers, Kautz wrote the first check to start the California Association of Winegrape Growers in 1974.

"John is one of the great people who make up our association of winegrape

growers," said John Aguirre, CAWG president. "His commitment to growers and protecting their interests, to community well-being, and to safeguarding the environment reflects what our members' value most, and is why CAWG has not only survived for 30-plus years, but also grown into an effective state and national agricultural advocate."

CAWG's Grower of the Year award will be presented at the association's Annual Meeting and Awards of Excellence reception on Jan. 24, 2012, in Sacramento.

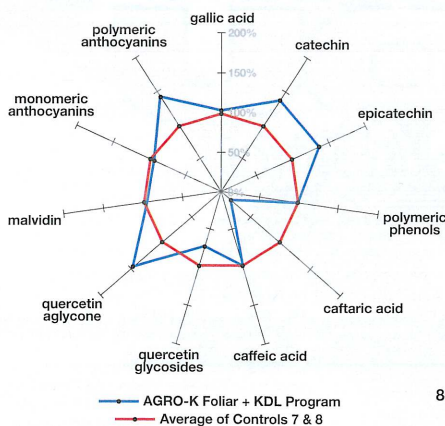


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