



Position Statement

ABOUT FANTESCA ESTATE & WINERY

When Susan and Duane Hoff purchased the secluded Spring Mountain vineyard now known as Fantesca Estate & Winery in 2004, they had grand aspirations. Top executives at Best Buy at the time, being the best was their forte, and their goal for the property was to produce world-class wines, and nothing less. The Minneapolis natives teamed up with noted Napa father-son winemaking duo Nils and Kirk Venge to craft their wines and accomplish their objectives. The 1000-case Spring Mountain District winery released its first wines in the fall of 2005—the 2002 Fantesca Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon and a 2004 Chardonnay, Los Carneros.

The Hoff's, college sweethearts who have been married for nearly 20 years, fell in love with the Napa Valley during romantic rendezvous' to the area over the past 10 years. As top execs with frenetically fast paced jobs at Best Buy, the Hoff's were looking for their next careers, knowing they wanted to turn to a slightly slower pace of life and enjoy the gratification of a job well done. They also dreamed of creating a family business, where their two children could get involved in everything from picking the wine label to harvesting the fruit. Even better, their son and daughter would know they had a hand in making the wine that will undoubtedly be served at their weddings someday.

Susan and Duane began looking for properties to build a winery and have a home in Napa in 2002 and were introduced to Cary Gott, a 35-plus year wine industry veteran, who has become their trusted business advisor and close friend. They had looked at more than a dozen properties by the time Gott learned that a property in the highly regarded Spring Mountain District was for sale. As the Hoff's had also been looking for a second home, they were immediately taken with the house, vistas and gardens, so much so, that when recounting their first visit, Duane laughed, and said, "I don't want to see any more of the house; I want to taste the wine, because if the wine quality isn't here, we can't purchase the house." Luckily for the Hoff's, the wine quality was in the barrel, and they closed on the property in February 2004.

The Fantesca property was originally in the dowry of Caroline Bale, when she married Charles Krug in 1860. Even then, it was recognized as prime mountain vineyard land. A Cabernet from this vineyard, made by Hannah Weinberger, one of the earliest female winemakers, won one of the first awards for a wine from the Napa Valley in 1889.

Today, the Fantesca Estate & Winery property encompasses 53 acres, 10 of which were planted in 1997 primarily to Cabernet Sauvignon, with a half acre each to Bordeaux varieties Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. The full scale, modern winery was built in 2001. Fantesca's cave is built into the side of Spring Mountain, and the rock face now exposed is rumored to have once been a stone quarry. The cave stretches 280 feet across a ridge of Spring Mountain, offering spectacular storage and aging capacities for Fantesca's wines and those of their custom crush clients.

On the other side of the cave is the Hoff's Saint Helena home, complete with extensive gardens bearing everything from pumpkins and tomatoes to corn and kiwi, a swimming pool, olive trees, and stunning vistas of Mt. St. Helena and the Palisades. An ideal home for cooking for friends and entertaining, the house has several indoor and outdoor dining areas and an outdoor grilling area. Susan and Duane's ideal way to spend their free time is to pick fresh fruit and vegetables from their gardens and cook for family and friends—serving Fantesca wines, of course!

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The Wine and Winemaking Team

This winery-to-watch was awarded a 90-point score and praise from Robert Parker, Jr. on their inaugural 2002 release: "A relatively new operation, this 800 case winery on Spring Mountain dedicated to 100% Cabernet Sauvignon produced an outstanding 2002. Deep ruby purple in color with a sweet nose of black currants, licorice, earth, and some berric smells the wine shows impressive concentration as well as purity, moderately high tannin and a structured style that suggests 1-3 years of bottle age will be essential after its release. It should age nicely for 10-15 years. This is an impressive start!"

Armed with kudos from the world's most influential critic, Fantesca's wines had an auspicious start and have since received further accolades from Wine Enthusiast and Wine & Spirits. Much of the initial credit could be credited to the winemaking duo—father-son team Nils and Kirk Venge. Nils is one of Napa's most talented winemakers, notably spiraling Groth Vineyards and Winery to fame with a perfect "100" point score from Robert Parker, Jr. for his 1985 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon. Nils is a highly sought-after winemaker and winemaking consultant, working with some of Napa's producers. Kirk, inherited his father's winemaking acumen coupled with his own business drive serving as winemaker and consultant for some of Napa's rising stars and newest players, Fantesca included. The Venges served as Fantesca's winemakers through 2007. In 2008, Fantesca was pleased to hire Heidi Barrett as their new winemaker. Wines crafted by Barrett have received an unmatched five perfect "100" point scores from Robert Parker, Jr. prompting him to give her the accolade of "The First Lady of Wine". Similarly, Wine & Spirits Magazine states, "In the realm of the Napa cult wine, Heidi Barrett is the reigning queen".

The Vineyard

Fantesca's vineyard stretches over terraces and hills and adjoins the cave and the winery. Located on the southeastern side of Spring Mountain, the vineyard has tremendous variations in slope in just less than 10 acres of vines, and its elevation and mountain terrain offers superb sun exposure and a long growing season. The unique terroir produces a rich and intense Cabernet, true to the character of the Spring Mountain District.

The vineyard is tended meticulously by a team of experts, led by Jim Barbour. In 1990, Jim began Barbour Vineyards, which currently manages or consults for 400+ acres of premium vineyards. For over 15 years, Jim has lead the way in managing and developing some of the best known vineyards in the Napa Valley, including: Amuse Bouche, Barnett Vineyard, Grace Family Vineyard, La Sirena Vineyards, Snowden Vineyards, to name only a few. Jim has worked side by side with some of the top winemakers including Heidi Peterson Barrett, Celia Welch Masyczek, Phillippe Melka, Thomas Brown, and Karen Culler.

Fantesca's estate vineyard has an incredibly diverse number of soil types, making the steep property difficult to farm, but incredibly rewarding in the complexity of fruit and the intensity of flavors. Watching the vineyard team at work, one senses the trust, pride and sense of ownership they have over this small parcel of land.

About Spring Mountain District

In the June 2005 issue of Food & Wine magazine, wine writer Laurie Daniel, writes in her article "The Best of Napa" about the Spring Mountain District: "Napa's Spring Mountain District creates Cabernets that are denser and more structured than those made just next door in St. Helena... There is no actual Spring Mountain. This mostly forested AVA, just above St. Helena, is not a mountain but a saddle of land between Mount Veeder and Diamond Mountain District. The name comes from the area's numerous natural springs. Grapes have been grown here since the 1870s, but only in the past decade or so did the region's reputation start to soar. Much of this is thanks to Cabernet, and that's what counts in Spring Mountain; powerful, rich, dense, dark Cabernet." One taste of Fantesca's 2002 Cabernet demonstrates all these things.

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Fantesca

ESTATE & WINERY

The Name

When asked about the inspiration and motto behind the Fantesca name, wines and winemaking venture, Susan Hoff immediately responds "Sexy, Smart, and Unpretentious." Fantesca's namesake comes from a fun-loving, frolicking female in Italian traveling comedy troupes of the Renaissance. At a time when women weren't even allowed on the stages of England, Italy embraced her feisty, flirty character.

Fantesca brought wit, sensuality, and insight to the characters of the "Zanni" in Italian theater. The Zanni troupes were Italy's most popular form of theater from the 1500's to the 1700's. Shakespeare is said to have taken inspiration from their work.

Annual Events at Fantesca Estate and Winery

To celebrate harvest, Fantesca Estate and Winery holds a "Hands-on Harvest" each fall, offering wine aficionados the opportunity to experience harvest from the winemaker's perspective. After a day of picking, sorting, and sampling grapes with the vineyard team, attendees sit down to a harvest feast at the Hoff's home, prepared by a stellar local Napa Valley chef. "Hands-on Harvest" usually takes place on the first Saturday of October.

The Current Vintages

Fantesca's Third vintage an 800-case 100% estate grown 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon displays the finesse and opulent style that are the hallmarks of Spring Mountain District. When swirled, notes of spice and berries capture your attention. While tasted, its rich and supple body tantalizes the palate. The winery's second wine, a 2006 Chardonnay from Los Carneros is the third vintage of chardonnay for Fantesca. Release Date April 2008 (500+ cases).

As Fantesca Estate & Winery does not have a tasting room and with highly limited production, fans of this new "best buy" wine are encouraged to shop online at www.fantesca.com, call the winery directly at 707-968-0890 to purchase the wine or join the mailing list. For more information, please visit www.fantesca.com.

