vinetur

Realm Cellars Buys Historic Farella Vineyard in Coombsville

The sale ends the Farella family’s decades-long ownership of a Napa site central to Coombsville’s rise as a Cabernet source.

Tuesday, July 28, 2026



The Farella family has sold its longtime Napa Valley vineyard in Coombsville to the owners of Realm Cellars, ending a chapter for one of the sites that helped define the modern reputation of the southern Napa appellation.

The transaction closed July 17 and includes a winery and 60 acres of land, with room for another 26 acres to be planted. The purchase price was not disclosed. Tom Farella will continue to run the family’s wine label under a lease agreement that gives him access to the winery now owned by Realm, and he is expected to keep buying some fruit from the vineyard.

The sale follows a long transition period for the family after the death of Frank Farella in early 2025. According to people involved in the deal, Tom Farella wanted to continue with the property while his siblings did not, creating pressure to find a structure that would preserve the vineyard’s operations while resolving estate issues.

For Napa Valley, the sale carries weight beyond a routine land transfer. The Farella vineyard has been tied to Coombsville’s rise from a cooler, less celebrated corner of Napa into an established source for Cabernet Sauvignon. Frank Farella bought the site in 1977 and planted Cabernet despite skepticism from several vintners at the time, including Robert Mondavi, who believed the area’s cooler conditions would make it difficult to ripen the variety fully.

That judgment proved wrong. Over time, fruit from Coombsville became valued by wineries looking for structure and freshness in blends with grapes from warmer parts of Napa Valley. In its early years, fruit from Farella Vineyard went into Robert Mondavi Reserve and Opus One bottlings, helping build the site’s standing inside the valley.

Tom Farella later took over the family label, which was launched in 1991. He also played a direct role in shaping Coombsville’s identity as an appellation. He wrote the petition that led to federal approval of the Coombsville American Viticultural Area in 2011, formalizing recognition for a district that growers had long argued had distinct soils and climate.

Under the new arrangement, Tom Farella, 66, will continue operating the Farella brand much as before, though on a smaller scale than in earlier years. The label produces about 1,000 cases a year of Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. He said the lease structure allows him to maintain continuity in daily operations while easing some of the burden of ownership.

Realm’s connection to the property is not new. The winery, owned by Scott Becker, has purchased fruit from Farella Vineyard since 2003 and began managing the site in 2018. That long relationship appears to have made Realm a natural buyer when the family decided it needed a solution that could keep farming and winemaking in place.

Becker described the acquisition as personal as well as strategic, saying Frank Farella was among the first people he met in the wine business and that Realm’s own development was closely tied to fruit from the estate. For Realm, taking ownership secures control over a vineyard it already knew well and deepens its footprint in Coombsville at a time when top Napa producers continue to seek reliable estate sources in established sub-appellations.

The deal also reflects a broader issue across California wine country, where generational change is forcing many families to reconsider how vineyards and wineries are passed on. In some cases, heirs want to remain involved; in others, they do not. Rising land values, operating costs and succession disputes have pushed more owners toward sales, partnerships or lease structures that allow brands to survive without keeping full control of real estate.

In this case, both sides appear to have aimed for continuity. Realm gains a historic vineyard and winery property with expansion potential. Tom Farella keeps his brand in place and remains connected to land his family farmed for decades. For Coombsville, one of its foundational vineyards stays in production under owners already familiar with its farming history and role in Napa Valley winemaking.