vinetur

Napa Valley Welcomes New AVA: Crystal Springs

Fog-Shrouded Crystal Springs Earns AVA Status

Friday, October 18, 2024



Napa Valley has officially added a new subregion for the first time in 13 years with the inclusion of Crystal Springs into its 16 existing American Viticultural Areas (AVA). Crystal Springs is located between St. Helena and Calistoga, in the foothills beneath Howell Mountain, and covers approximately 230 acres, mostly occupied by vineyards. Notable wineries in the area include Bremer, Viader, and Somnium, owned by former race car driver Danica Patrick.

The approval of Crystal Springs as a new AVA was the result of a process that took over four years, overseen by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). Steven Burgess, former owner of Burgess Cellars, has been working on establishing this

designation since 2005. The last AVA approved in Napa Valley was Coombsville in 2011. Until now, wineries in Crystal Springs had to label their wines under the broader Napa Valley designation, which spans over 120,000 acres. According to Burgess, this labeling did not allow consumers to fully understand the distinct characteristics of wines from the area. Simply using "Napa Valley" made it difficult to differentiate between wines with varying flavors and tannin structures.

Vineyards in Crystal Springs are often confused with those in Howell Mountain, which has a minimum elevation of 1,400 feet. While the vineyards in Howell Mountain sit above the fog, those in Crystal Springs are usually covered by it, leading to significant differences in growing conditions and, consequently, in the flavor profiles of the wines. Burgess emphasized that these are two entirely different wine-growing regions, justifying the creation of a separate AVA for Crystal Springs.

In addition to this new viticultural recognition, Crystal Springs has recently been the focus of controversy over a proposed winery construction project. The initial proposal for Vida Valiente Winery was rejected by the Napa Valley Planning Coalition, but after an appeal from the owners, it was approved by the Napa County Board of Supervisors. However, a neighbor has filed a lawsuit against the county over this decision, causing further delays to the winery's development. According to Burgess, the project falls outside the limits of the Crystal Springs AVA and will not directly affect the vineyards within the newly designated area.

Crystal Springs was also the origin of the devastating Glass Fire in 2020, adding a historical dimension to the new AVA. The designation aims to protect the authenticity of the wines and help consumers better identify the wines from this area, which are predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, known for their dark, complex flavors and rich aromatic profiles. This new distinction could also lead to an increase in bottle prices, given the differentiation it brings to the competitive Napa Valley wine market.