

## Without a Care

An Interview with Kate McManus,  
Vice President of Marketing, Far Niente Wine Estates



**EDITORS' NOTE** *Kate McManus is a leader in marketing, business development and branding with more than 25 years of experience in the wine and spirits industry. She has focused on building talented and dedicated teams by creating a positive culture that fosters innovation and creativity. As a thought leader, McManus is an expert in developing strategies for winery portfolios and excels in building brands with a consumer first approach. Over the years, Kate has worked for some of the industry's top companies from New York to Napa Valley.*



Kate McManus

*After spending over 10 years with Remy Cointreau and Kobrand in NYC, she moved to the Bay Area almost 20 years ago. As Vice President of Marketing at Constellation Brands, Kate led marketing for domestic and international wineries from New Zealand to Italy with a focus on both luxury and innovation. Later at Delicato Family Vineyards, she was given the opportunity to rebuild a marketing department with expanded trade and digital capabilities and a more consumer first mindset. Since joining Far Niente Wine Estates in early 2022, she is focused on strengthening FNWE's consumer marketing, winery experiences, and supporting the winemaking teams to build on their recognition as a premier Napa Valley and Sonoma producer.*

**WINERY BRIEF** *Far Niente (farniente.com), renowned for its Napa Valley Chardonnay, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon, is one of Napa Valley's original stone wineries, constructed in the late 19th century. Today, more than 125 years later, the winery stands as a stunning example of the region's early winemaking heritage.*

**What excited you about the opportunity to join Far Niente Wine Estates (FNWE) and made you feel it was the right fit?**

I eagerly joined Far Niente Wine Estates (FNWE) due to its exceptional collection of renowned brands that command great respect, consistently craft exquisite wines, prioritize meticulousness, and set the standard for unparalleled hospitality. These brands embody an exceptional dedication to quality, catering to consumers of all backgrounds, and exemplifying industry leadership in every aspect, from their meticulous farming practices to the exquisite taste of their wines. I feel that I was the right fit for the role at FNWE because I bring more than 25

years of strategic, consumer-first oriented marketing expertise. My background lies in planning and developing strategies for strategic portfolios, and I excel in building brands with a consumer-first approach. I am developing strategies for each of FNWE's brands that will support their foundation and position them for future growth. By taking a consumer first approach, I am focused on strengthening the company's commitment to providing the finest in luxury hospitality and service in the Napa Valley.

FNWE is dedicated to investing in its wines at all levels of production, from farming the vineyards to committing to sustainable practices across its wineries. Since joining the company in April 2022, I have played a fundamental role in our company's work to build a new home for our Bella Union brand at the former Provenance winery in Rutherford.

**Will you discuss the history and heritage of Far Niente Wine Estates?**

Far Niente was established in Oakville, California in 1885 by John Benson, a forty-niner from the California gold rush. The winery prospered until the onset of Prohibition in 1919, when it ceased operation and the estate was abandoned. Sixty years later, the Nickel family purchased the winery and neighboring vineyard. The old stone shell of the winery underwent a three-year renovation which restored the building to its original, 19th century grandeur. They released their first wine, a Chardonnay, from the 1979 vintage, and winemaking returned to the estate in 1982. During restoration, the name "Far Niente," which romantically translated means "without a care," was found carved in stone on the front of the building.

Far Niente helped create the high-end Napa Valley wine market and has served as the benchmark wine estate for more than four decades. Dolce, the only North American winery devoted to a single late-harvest, botrytized Napa Valley wine, was introduced in 1989. Nickel & Nickel, launched in 1997, is focused on producing single-vineyard, single varietal Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. EnRoute, established in 2007 in the Russian River Valley, is dedicated to the appellation's Pinot Noir. Bella Union, devoted to Napa Valley Cabernet and located along Bella Oaks Lane in Rutherford, introduced its first wine with the 2012 vintage. Most recently, Post & Beam launched in 2020 with classic expressions of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Together, the wineries comprise Far Niente Wine Estates.

**Will you highlight Far Niente Winery and the guest experience when visiting the winery?**

Our Far Niente Winery sits nobly atop a crest in the heart of Oakville, Napa Valley. From beautifully cultivated gardens, to sprawling estate vineyards, to historic wine caves, you can explore the full splendor of the idyllic Far Niente Winery while enjoying a seated private tasting of our world-renowned Napa Valley wines.

Our signature experience is the Cave Collection Library Wine Tasting, which offers a tasting of our current release wines alongside specially selected Cave Collection library vintages expertly paired with seasonal food complements by Executive Chef Phillip Moratin. During this private, seated tasting, guests can discover how Far Niente wines age and evolve over time.

**What have been the keys to the consistent strength and leadership of Far Niente Wine Estates in the industry?**



Far Niente Wine Estates in Napa Valley (above); the winery's north cave doors (top); and a selection of Far Niente wines (opposite page)

As a benchmark wine producer in the Napa and Russian River Valleys, Far Niente Wine Estates is committed to preserving the land that we call home. Our goal from the beginning has been to prioritize environmental protection and sustainability, from installing the world's first floatovoltaic solar energy system in 2008, to conserving water through forward-looking and innovative farming practices. As part of our core mission of being responsible neighbors, we are also committed to bettering our community through the philanthropic initiatives and philosophy that was established by our founders, the Nickel family.

Our employees differentiate us in the industry through their knowledge and dedication to our vineyard and winemaking imprint. We are honored to further a strong company culture based upon respect, excellence, integrity, and social responsibility. We invest in our people through supportive wages, benefits, and a continual emphasis on evolving and growing.



We engage in the community holding agricultural representation in local government, memberships in the Farm Bureau, Napa Valley Grapegrowers, Winegrowers, Napa Valley Vintners, and certifications across multiple levels in the company, which reflects our dedication. Our partnership with our teams allows us to be nimble, be open to new ways of doing things, and to never stop finding ways to be the best possible stewards of the resources we have been entrusted with.

**Will you elaborate on Far Niente Wine Estates' commitment to sustainability?**

We strive to champion biodiversity and sustainability in our vineyards and wineries. From water conservation and drought mitigation to improving winery efficiencies and reducing carbon emissions, we value environmental stewardship in all aspects of our company.

**Water Conservation:** One of the most important aspects of our sustainable practices is water conservation. With limited water supplies, conserving and recycling water helps us maximize this precious resource. To this end, we have implemented practices such as replanting our estate

vineyard blocks with drought-resistant rootstocks and installed technologies that measure vine-water demand and use other natural measures for early soil cultivation and weed control.

**Carbon Emissions Reduction:** Improved vineyard and winery efficiencies is of the utmost importance for all aspects of our day-to-day work. We avoid peak hours of electrical energy usage and implement multi-row mechanization to reduce tractor-drive time. Our Far Niente and Nickel & Nickel wineries are solar-powered, net-zero users of electricity energy for everything on the property.

**Integrated Pest Management:** By proactively tackling bio control efforts, we work to sustainably control pests and mitigate the risks they pose without relying on non-sustainable control measures and harmful plant chemicals. FNWE utilizes predatory insect release and insect mating disruption strategies allowing us to target specific pest species and proactively reduce pest populations. We also forgo the use of traditional pesticides which negatively affect the health of our vines, soils and water sources.

**Soil Health:** A multi-layered approach to each site's soil is an ongoing process to improve the health of each specific vineyard. FNWE has a multi-tiered belief in soil health. Heavy pre-plant compost applications of 25 tons per acre is an investment that pays us back in perpetuity. Benefits include reducing tillage needs down to zero, successful cover crops, improved nutritional levels in the rootzone, and increased storage of carbon.

**Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation:** The promotion of ecology across our vineyards and properties has been an impressive feat. We have installed native corridors to allow animals to pass through our properties and invested in high density (1 per 20 acres) owl boxes and raptor perches to control gophers, voles and squirrels without pesticides.

**Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation:** Fossil fuel reduction is a priority at FNWE and is exemplified by our Scope 1, 2 and 3 GHG audit. In the vineyards, we minimize tractor passes with effective farm planning and multi-row operations reducing GHG. In 2008,

Far Niente installed the world's first Floatovoltaic solar energy array in the winery's vineyard irrigation pond saving valuable acreage. Far Niente purchased eight new propane powered frost fans to replace the diesel-powered water pumps saving over 5,000,000 gallons of water per year while reducing diesel consumption.

As a result of these efforts, FNWE has earned a number of sustainability certifications and awards. Far Niente and Nickel & Nickel are Certified California Sustainable Wineries (CCSW) – reflecting a commitment to growing and crafting quality wine grapes and wine while protecting the environment, being a good neighbor and employer, and maintaining thriving farms and businesses. They are also Napa Green Certified Wineries – demonstrated from production and administration to hospitality, they have implemented more than 120 sustainability and stewardship standards, and are committed to promoting sustainability.

**Did you always know you had a passion for the wine industry and what has made the industry special for you?**

At a young age, I started working in my Uncle Sal's restaurant in New Jersey. From coat check to bartender and everything in between, I fell in love with the idea of bringing people together around a table to enjoy great food, wine, and conversation. After graduating college, I embarked on an adventure to Europe to discover more. Armed with just my Eurail pass and a backpack, my journey introduced me to the diverse cuisines across the continent, where I learned about the significant role that food and wine play in different cultures. Upon returning to New York City to kick off my career, I couldn't resist the opportunity to work as an entry-level marketing coordinator for a large French company that imported Champagne, Cognac, and Italian wines. From there, I fully immersed myself in my love for travel, history, and the sheer joy that food and wine bring to a culture.

In fear of sounding cliché, it's the people in the industry who have truly made it special. I was fortunate to receive guidance and support from some C-suite executives who believed in my ideas and allowed me to develop and launch brands like The Dreaming Tree with Dave Matthews. I also had the opportunity to create new strategies for old-world wineries, such as Ruffino Estates from Italy, while finding ways to make Chianti more relevant to consumers and launching line extensions in growing categories like Pinot Grigio and Prosecco. Being involved in building new categories from their infancy, like Black Box 3L boxed wines and Tetra pack wines, taught me the importance of innovation. Nowadays, my focus is on mentoring and giving back to those entering the business. I am deeply passionate about workplace equality, particularly in the wine industry. In the past, I served as co-chair of the Women's Leadership Committee, where I provided guidance and mentorship, and helped establish an internal women's recognition program. I have also been actively involved in and sponsored Women of the Vine & Spirits. At Far Niente Wine Estates, I currently serve as the co-chair of the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) committee, where I contribute to guiding internal sustainability, DEI, and community development efforts. ●