



CHAPPELLET

Donn Chappellet
Co-founder, Chairman Emeritus

For almost 50 years, Donn Chappellet guided Chappellet, establishing its reputation as one of the world's great family-owned and operated wineries. In addition to founding the second post-Prohibition winery in the Napa Valley, Donn was also one of the early pioneers of high-elevation hillside planting, earning acclaim for Chappellet's benchmark mountain-grown wines, and influencing generations of vintners to come.

The seed for Donn's lifelong love affair with wine was planted during an early road trip to the Napa Valley with his wife, Molly. Los Angeles natives, Donn and Molly loved both the wines and the relaxed nature of the valley, and a shared passion for fine wine soon became an important part of their lives.

In 1954, Donn co-founded Interstate United Corporation, a food service business that distributed the first vending machines to make fresh coffee from grounds. Under Donn's and partner Ron Wolff's leadership, the company grew to 8,000 employees and earned a listing on the New York Stock Exchange. After 14 years of successfully running Interstate United, Donn was eager to find a quieter life for his family outside the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles. Ready for a change of pace, and a change of venue, he sold his shares and turned toward his passion for wine.

When searching for the ideal vineyard property, Donn was inspired by the ancient Roman saying that "Bacchus loves the hills," a belief that was echoed by legendary winemaker André Tchelistcheff, who counseled Donn to seek out a hillside site. In 1967, Donn founded Chappellet on the rocky slopes of Pritchard Hill. There, he dedicated himself to creating world-class wines equal in stature to the great first growth Bordeaux. To achieve this goal, Donn applied a hands-on approach, driving tractors in the vineyard, helping to build Chappellet's iconic winery, and contributing to the blending process.

Over the years, Donn's belief in Pritchard Hill was proven correct, and the site emerged as the source for some of North America's most extraordinary wines. At the same time, Chappellet has established a legacy for excellence that has endured for more than five decades, and has been embraced by a passionate second generation of the family.

Donn Chappellet passed away in 2016, and is widely recognized as one of the pioneers and icons who helped to shape the Napa Valley wine industry. Donn was one of the founding members of the Wine Services Co-op in 1972. He was also one of the first 18 members of the Napa Valley Vintners Association. Today, this organization numbers over 425 members.