

HISTORIC WINERY STRIVES TO CREATE THE NATION'S NEWEST AMERICAN VITICULTURAL AREA (AVA)

CALISTOGA, Calif. (September 19, 2003) – Chateau Montelena, one of California's oldest and most storied wineries today announced the petition to create a Calistoga AVA, the northern-most district within the Napa Valley appellation. Calistoga has long been recognized as a unique wine-growing area but is the last Napa Valley township to petition the Federal government for AVA status.

“Good wines take on the very essence of where they are grown and produced, from the aroma to the lingering flavor on the palate,” explained owner and vintner James Barrett. “Therefore, it makes sense that the distinct wine-growing regions of California are reflected in name on the bottle so consumers have a sense of the origin of the wine they are enjoying.”

The Calistoga region is approximately seven square miles with roughly 2,500 acres suitable for vineyards. The unique soil and climate conditions have long distinguished this area, leading to its international reputation for exemplary Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel among other high-quality wines. According to James Halliday in the Wine Atlas of California, the difference between the climates of the northernmost and southernmost cities in the Napa Valley, Calistoga and Napa “...is so extreme that in viticultural terms one might as well be talking of different countries.”

The application, which was submitted in late August, requests that this region, unique in both climate and geography, be recognized as a distinct AVA. Approval would allow area wineries to add to the current “Napa Valley” appellation designation on their bottles with the more site specific designation: “Calistoga.” Ultimately this will help consumers make better informed purchasing decisions and give Calistoga vintners equal stature with their neighbors throughout the Napa Valley.

Established in 1882, Chateau Montelena is one of Napa Valley's oldest wineries. Purchased by the Barrett family in 1972, the vineyards were completely replanted and Chateau Montelena bottled its first vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon from the Montelena Estate Vineyard in 1978. Planted on St. George rootstock, which is resistant to phylloxera, they are some of the oldest producing Cabernet Sauvignon vines in Napa Valley. In addition to its benchmark Chardonnay, which won the 1976 Paris Tasting, Chateau Montelena is also revered for producing top-rated Cabernet Sauvignons, a record of consistency that has made the wine avidly sought by collectors around the world and one of the few U.S. wines to be the object of a successful futures program.

Chateau Montelena is located in the Napa Valley hamlet of Calistoga at 1429 Tubbs Lane. The

winery is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. for wine tasting. Tours and tastings can be reserved by calling (707) 942-5105. Fax: (707) 942-4221 or send an e-mail to reservations@montelena.com. Chateau Montelena can be visited on the Web at www.montelena.com.