

## Bart and Daphne Araujo step back from Accendo Cellars

On the eve of their 10th year producing world-class Napa Cabernet at Accendo Cellars, Bart and Daphne Araujo have announced they are stepping away from Accendo and passing the torch to second-generation partners Jaime and Greg Araujo.



Jonathan Cristaldi  
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Left to right: Greg, Jaime, Daphne and Bart Araujo. Credit: Jimmy Hayes

In 1990, the Araujos purchased the famous Eisele Vineyard in Calistoga, California, from Milt and Barbara Eisele and established Araujo Estate. They enlisted winemaker Tony Soter and viticulturist David Abreu.

Their debut 1991 vintage earned high praise and affirmed their dedication to preserving the reputation of Eisele's incomparable terroir, which dates back to 1884. Their conversion of the site to biodynamics and continued success producing classic, structured, ageworthy wines only cemented the status of the 15.38ha site and the Araujo label. Their bottlings became some of the most sought-after Cabernet-based wines in all of Napa.

In 2013, Artémis Domaines, the group controlled by French billionaire François Pinault and family, and which also owns Bordeaux first growth Château Latour, purchased Araujo Estate.

Without skipping a beat, the Araujos launched into their second act and established Accendo Cellars. Françoise Peschon, joined Araujo Estate in 1993 as its on-site winemaker, produces the Accendo Cellars whites, and Nigel Kinsman, another Araujo alumnus crafts the reds.

Both Peschon and Kinsman will retain their roles, and the wines will continue to be produced at Wheeler Farms, based in St Helena, California. The Araujos are also founding partners of Wheeler Farms, a high-end custom crush facility and hospitality centre, which they established in 2014.

Bart Araujo plans to serve in an advisory role as executive chairman over the next six months during the transition of ownership to Jaime and Greg. 'They have the talent, the passion, and the pride to take Accendo to the next level. It's their time,' he said.

Jaime Araujo told Decanter: 'At a time when successful generational transfers are less common among American wineries, we are even more excited to take the reins in this next chapter of Accendo Cellars and build on our family's legacy in the Napa Valley.'

'This is an opportunity to not only usher in the next generation of our family, but also move forward with the next generation of wine consumers.'

'While ownership of Accendo Cellars is transitioning, in many ways it feels very much like business as usual because the team we have worked with for the last 10-plus years remains unchanged, from winemaking and viticulture to operations and sales.'

As the curtain falls on one of Napa Valley's greatest acts, it is, thankfully, only an intermission. And there is no question that even as the spotlight rises on the second-generation Araujos, Bart and Daphne, two of Napa Valley's most important luminaries will not merely oversee a sound transition, as mentors, they will pass on the vital lessons of a life in California wine country, well-lived.