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Case, please contact Professor
Randy Haykin at
Haykin@haas.berkeley.edu



Randy Haykin
Sunil Shanker

Steven Kent Winery: ICE¹ in a bottle

On Saturday morning, February 27, 2010, Steven Mirassou rose early as he always did to prepare for another weekend at his company, the Steven Kent Winery. Closing his latest blog² stating, “No purported exactitude can ever take the place of a smile at the cellar door”, he reflected on his childhood and the days spent toiling at his family winery - from picking grapes to crushing them, from scrubbing the warehouse floors to working the bottling line, from running through the cellars to working in the tasting room. The wine industry, while quite mature, never ceased to challenge his creativity, yet as a young 6th-generation wine maker starting out his own brand, he wondered if the industry had already passed an age when any further innovation could occur.

The Heritage of Steven Kent Mirassou

Steven Kent Mirassou belongs to the first family of American wines - *the Mirassou's*. In 1852, Louis Pellier and his brother Pierre (Steven's great-great-great grandfather) left the town of La Rochelle (north of Bordeaux) in France and came to San Jose, California towards the end of the Gold Rush. Not finding their fortunes in the gold fields, they did make their way to some of the most productive farm land in California. Pierre returned to France to source vine cuttings and a variety of fruit trees which the brothers planted in the Mission San Jose area of Santa Clara Valley (presently the home of California's Silicon Valley) in 1854. The Pellier brothers, who were nurserymen and winemakers in France, continued these two enterprises in California, and are credited with introducing new crop

¹ Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

² Wine in the Valley, The Steven Kent Winery blog: <http://wineinthevalley.blogspot.com>

Professor Randy Haykin, U.C. Berkeley's Haas School of Business and Sunil Shanker, Haas MBA'11, prepared this case. Special thanks to Ali Bloomfield for her assistance in editing this case. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management. This case was developed along with a “virtual case” of video segments that students will have access to along with the case.