

# 100 GAME CHANGERS

**W**hat moved the North American wine industry forward during the last 100 years? Events as big as Prohibition and as seemingly small as a television news report on “60 Minutes.” People as prominent as winery founder Robert Mondavi and as modest as cold-climate grape breeder Elmer Swenson. Innovations as complex as membrane filtration and as simple as a collection of plastic tubing called drip irrigation.

As *Wines & Vines* enters its 100th year of publishing, we want to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions made by 100 Game Changers described in the following pages. They were critical in transforming the wine industry since 1919 from a depressed, practically hopeless scattering of wineries and vineyards about to be outlawed by a U.S. constitutional amendment to a thriving, growing industry that now generates \$47 billion in sales per year of U.S. wines and has a \$9 billion economic impact in Canada.

Our editorial team compiled the admittedly subjective list of Game Changers based on our own knowledge and judgments aided by several industry members. Our goal was to recognize people, events and innovations that significantly altered the course of wine production and grapegrowing. We hope you enjoy paging through the mini-articles that follow. They are not ranked in order of importance but are meant to provide a winding tour through the history of our industry.

The articles were written by Andrew Adams, editor; Stacy Briscoe, staff writer; Linda Jones McKee, Wine East editor; Peter Mitham, Northwest correspondent; Laurie Daniel, contributing writer; and myself.

— Jim Gordon

A row of wooden wine barrels in a cellar, with a small metal fire pit in the foreground containing a bright flame.

## Barrels

A traditional tool still relevant in modern winemaking

In a change that's more incremental than radical, barrels have remained a critical piece of equipment for making wine despite all the other changes and innovations in wineries. Ask a winemaker what he or she thinks is the most important quality of a barrel, and the answer is typically consistency. With each vintage bringing its own set of ever-changing conditions, minimizing variation in barrels is a huge help to achieve a certain winemaking style or profile. After European coopers began investing in the United States, such as Nadalie USA opening a cooperage in 1980, America's own coopers, which had been wholly focused on whiskey, saw an opportunity to differentiate and expand. Cooperages 1912 Napa, which sells the popular World Cooperage brand of barrels and the premium line TW Boswell barrels as well as owning a stave mill and cooperage in France, has become one of the biggest wine barrel producers in the world. European cooperages have sought to build on centuries of tradition with such innovations as Oakscan by Tonnellerie Radoux and the ICÔNE oak composition analysis by Seguin Moreau, which has led to better-built and more reliable barrels. American oak wine barrels have also steadily improved, with European investment such as [Chêne & Cie](#) buying [Canton Cooperage](#) and improving production. A few coopers, such as Tonnellerie O, have begun to offer American oak from forests in specific states.