

# Topel Winery

Some 1,400 feet above the valley floor, on the east side of Duncan Peak, sits Topel Winery. It is here, above the fog line, that Mark and Donnis Topel embarked on a dream. In 1989, they began planting Hidden Vineyard, the only vineyard on the mountain.

*ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY GROWING  
CONDITIONS ARE THE KEY INGREDIENT TO  
TOPEL'S SUPERIOR FRUIT.*



The duo chose to start with Cabernet Sauvignon before adding Merlot, Petit Verdot, and Syrah. Today, that dream is fully realized.

Mark Topel was a 34-year-old lawyer who enjoyed an occasional glass of fine wine when he decided to pose for a portrait at the behest of his Berkeley neighbor, an art broker who represented a talented painter living in an artists' colony in Hopland.

Mark made the trek to the painter's home, located up a narrow gravel road on the side of Duncan Peak in southern Mendocino County. The remote, peaceful setting was a far cry from the daily cacophony and drama of the courtroom scene. Sensing that his subject was enamored with the surroundings, the artist casually mentioned that an old sheep farm just up the road happened to be for sale. The canvas and paint brushes were set aside, and within hours, Mark had written up a contract and purchased the first parcel of what has become a 160-acre property.

"A few years later, several of my wine-maker friends told me Hopland is a great place to grow Cabernet Sauvignon," recalls Mark with a smile. "One thing led to another and before I knew it, vines were planted and my wife and I were auditing winemaking and viticulture classes at U.C. Davis."

Not long after, Mark and his wife, Donnis, a former pastry chef and gifted dancer, built a small winery and their dream house on the estate and moved there for "spiritual sustenance." Mark

*"We literally capture a piece of time so when we open a bottle...it brings back the entire year."*

— FOUNDER, MARK TOPEL

became the winemaker while Donnis blossomed into the enologist, marketing guru, and administrative glue. "She has a tremendous aesthetic sense that impacts everything she touches," observes Mark. "Her background in cooking is a remarkable asset, especially when it comes to blending the wines." Donnis's aesthetic sense and culinary skills have been indispensable in the evolution of Topel wines. Today, Donnis travels nationwide to represent and market their wines.

In 1993, Topel Winery released its first vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon from the aptly named "Hidden Vineyard." The winery soon expanded to other varietals such as Syrah and Pinot Noir. These wines are rich and laden with highly extracted fruit flavors, yet perfectly balanced and elegant—they reflect the nuances of climate, soil, rootstocks, and clones in artful combinations. Topel wines have won numerous awards and high accolades from wine writers.

Such artful combinations can be attributed to the commitment of the Topels and their staff to grow as perfectly ripe grapes as possible. The Topels

raise superior grapes with an edge of stress in an environment where fertilizers and weed killers are never used and the ground is never tilled.

"The goal of Topel Winery is simple," says Mark. "To make absolutely the best wine from these grapes in this spot at this time, and to do it honestly. We literally capture a piece of time so when we open a bottle, no matter when, it brings back the entire year."

#### WHAT TO BUY

**'02 Pinot Noir, Serendipity**

*Rich and smoky with aromas and flavors of tangy cherry, chocolate, and vanilla. \$22.50*

**'03 Syrah, Cuvee Donnis**

*Bold, spicy, and rich with a long finish; liquid passion. \$24.50*

**'03 Meritage, Cuvee Duncan Peak**

*A magical, opulent blend in the true tradition of Bordeaux. \$25*

**'01 Cabernet Sauvignon, Hidden Vineyard**

*Elegant, with intense flavors of blackberry, anise, and chocolate. \$34.50*

#### TOPEL WINERY

P.O. Box 510  
Hopland, CA 95449  
(707) 744-1787  
[www.topelwines.com](http://www.topelwines.com)

*Tastings by Appointment Only*

#### GETTING THERE

*Topel Winery is located 1,400 feet up the side of Duncan Peak, just south of the town of Hopland in Mendocino County. For detailed driving instructions, please contact the winery.*



*TOP: TOURS AND TASTINGS AT TOPEL WINERY ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.*

*MIDDLE: MARK TOPEL IS THE WINEMAKER WHILE WIFE DONNIS IS THE MARKETING AND ADMINISTRATIVE GLUE.*

*BOTTOM: TOPEL WINERY IS COMPRISED OF 160 ACRES OF FRUIT AND FLOWERS.*