



## **Krupp Brothers Transform a Desert Mountainscape into a Napa Valley Vineyard Icon**

### **The Rocky History of Krupp Brothers and Stagecoach Vineyards**

When Dr. Jan Krupp purchased a 41-acre property high in the eastern hills of Napa Valley, he had no idea how many odds were stacked against him. A Bay Area internist with a green thumb and a hunger for the joy he once felt working his uncle's Virginia farm, Krupp ignored the warning signs "presenting" on his barren acreage and paid attention instead to the property's unplumbed potential.

It was 1991, six years before the breakout vintage of Napa Valley Cabernet on Atlas Peak and Pritchard Hill's eastern mountain slopes – the year that launched Maya and David Arthur into the cult wine world. Jan had a desert mountain landscape on Atlas Peak and Pritchard Hill with no power, no known water sources and no legal right of access, yet all he could see was the potential buried beneath boulders and chaparral. It was more than just a feeling; Krupp had been immersed in garage winemaking long enough to know the shallow red volcanic soils of these south-facing slopes rising into and over the fogline were ideal for growing intense berries rich with mineral and mountain flavors.

Enlisting the help of his brother Bart, who possessed real business acumen and shared Jan's devotion to fine wine, Jan Krupp began to slowly and sustainably clear his new vineyard. To begin, they hired a geologist, who identified several potential water sites and told them to drill to 300 feet. But when they hit nothing but dirt with each strike, they ignored their deep skepticism and turned to a water witch. After walking the property, she pointed her divining rod to a patch and instructed them to drill – directly into a flowing river 400 feet underground.

To carve the snaking road up to their vineyard, the brothers went through months of red tape – and 135 legal documents – in order to obtain access rights. The road itself took a month to build. Once the road was in place and the water was flowing, the pair lit their sticks of dynamite, cleared the boulders (some the size of SUVs) and began planting. They also began diligently replanting native riparian vegetation, and almost from the "get-go," Jan and Bart committed themselves to restoring and maintaining their rare mountain ecosystem.

Four years, an additional 750-acres and 500,000 tons of cleared rocks later, the brothers have carved three of Napa Valley's most sought after vineyards into what was once considered a barren wilderness: the original 1-acre Krupp Vineyard, the 48-acre Krupp Brothers Vineyard and the now iconic 1108-acre Stagecoach Vineyard. The Krupp brothers began planting 100 acres a year, and currently, total acreage under vine is 560, with another 85 being developed. In 1999, Jan Krupp put his first wine, Veraison Cabernet Sauvignon into bottle, and with it Krupp Brothers winery was officially born.

Today, the Krupps' low-yielding vines provide fruit for many of the Napa Valley's biggest names, including Caymus, Paul Hobbs and Pahlmeyer. And according to *Wine Spectator's* James Laube, as winemakers clamor for the Krupps' supple grapes, these sites are providing more and more competition to iconic vineyards like Napa Valley's famous To Kalon. Winemaker Nigel Kinsman and Consulting Winemaker Aaron Pott say that's because the three vineyards' mountain climate – lower temperatures during the day and a less dramatic fluctuation between

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day and evening – along with their Aiken Series soils are pitch perfect for growing grapes that reach full phenolic maturity without overripe sugar levels.

In Bordeaux, Pott says, the biggest struggle for winemakers is that grapes reach phenolic maturity before it reaches sugar maturity, producing wines that are either out of balance or a harvest ruined by rain and rot. On the Napa Valley floor, the challenge is reaching phenolic maturity without ripening the grapes to sugar levels beyond those that – again – create balanced wines. The Krupps’ three vineyards, and most specifically Stagecoach, strike the perfect compromise between the two worlds, which allows winemakers to produce Bordeaux-inspired blends that Pott calls big, rich and supple.

A UC-Davis grad with a Masters in Viticulture from the Universite de Bourgogne in Dijon, Pott is considered among Napa Valley’s winemaking elite. After honing his cellar skills under the famous Michel Rolland, Kinsman, too, is among the up-and-coming class of winemakers who staunchly believe wines are “grown not made.” Choosing a small percentage of select fruit from all three vineyards, the duo works together to create Krupp Brothers’ hand-crafted private labels: Veraison, Black Bart and Krupp. Their goal is always to make wines with balance, longevity and complexity while also possessing density, extraction and textured tannins. Or, as Pott and Kinsman say, they make wines with one foot planted in the old world and another firmly rooted in the new.

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