

Schug Estate

German craftsmanship with California flair

Sales and marketing director Axel Schug, winemaker Walter Schug (centre) and winemaker Michael Cox



Walter Schug trained as a winemaker in Germany before heading to California, where he made a name for himself as a pioneer of fine Pinot Noir.

Nestled between California's San Pablo Bay and the wine-growing regions of Napa and Sonoma is a rolling landscape draped in morning fog, until the afternoon marine winds clear the air and reveal one of the world's unique appellations: Carneros, home of Schug Carneros Estate.

The cooling effect of the unique weather and topography allows the grapes to ripen slowly while retaining acidity, making it the perfect place for Pinot Noir. No one knows this better than Walter Schug, owner and Winemaker Emeritus. Not only has he made Pinot Noir for 60 years, but the variety is in his blood; he grew up in the Rheingau in Germany, where his father, Ewald Schug, served from 1922 to 1959 as director at the Staatsweingut Assmannshausen, planted to Pinot Noir since the twelfth century. So Pinot Noir production has been a Schug family tradition for nearly 100 years.

After Walter Schug completed his studies at Geisenheim University, he worked at several wineries in Germany before moving to California in 1959. He was the first winemaker at Joseph Phelps in 1973, where he became known for Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling. But his dedication to Pinot Noir is so great that when Phelps decided in 1980 to cease production of the grape, Schug negotiated to continue producing Pinot Noir under his own name.

Despite tremendous success at Phelps, Schug's devotion to Pinot Noir saw him lease land in Napa to develop his own brand. In 1989, Walter and his wife Gertrud purchased their own land in Carneros. Today, Schug Carneros Estate remains a family endeavor, although Gertrud passed away in 2007.

Son Axel, with the company since 1989, is a joint owner and managing partner, responsible for worldwide sales. Axel's

wife, Kristine, the winery chef, has created hundreds of recipes to pair with Schug wines. Kristine's brother, Scott Stone, manages the financial affairs.

Claudia Schug-Schuetz, Walter's daughter, is European Sales Director, as well as an MW candidate and the German ambassador for the California Wine Institute. Michael Cox, winemaker since 1995, is a de facto family member. A Northern California native, Michael grew up in the town of Sonoma and spent time in the Sonoma Valley wine region as a student. Originally, Mike studied chemical engineering at the University of California at Los Angeles, before realizing his heart was in wine; he transferred to the U.C. Davis campus and graduated with a degree in Enology in 1991. Mike will celebrate 20 years as winemaker in 2015, the year Walter officially retires from winery duties.

The Schug family may have had a shoe-making past, with "Schug" likely derived from "schuh", the German word for shoe; indeed, there's a man holding a shoe in the family crest. But with almost 100 years of working with wine and a family that is entirely devoted to the grape, Schug has already come to mean something else entirely: Excellence in winemaking.



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