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Legacy of Dreams

Second-generation immigrants are taking over their parents' businesses, adding modern flair — and American flavor

By [LISA TAKEUCHI CULLEN](#)

“In some cases, the children of immigrants, thanks to education and experience, are leaving hard labor behind for good. Mexican workers in California's wine country have been preparing for generations to face their unique challenge: trading grape-stained work gloves for ownership papers. Since the 1940s, millions of Mexicans have traveled across the border to work the California vineyards. Those economics haven't changed in what is now the \$33 billion U.S. wine capital. During harvest, Napa County is home to up to 2,700 migrant workers, most from Mexico. For as much as \$15 an hour, the workers endure 18-hour days of backbreaking labor, often with no benefits or job security.

Salvador Renteria traveled illegally across the border in the early 1960s to work in Napa. He moved up from driving stakes in the vineyards as a laborer for \$20 a day to being a salaried foreman and supervisor. His son Oscar earned a college degree while learning all his father knew about vineyard management. In 1987 Salvador opened Renteria Vineyard Management, which oversees 1,500 acres of vineyard for 27 high-profile clients, employs 130 people and hauls in revenues of \$8 million a year. Recently Oscar, 36, who took over the company in 1993, launched the company's own wine. "By growing grapes, there's not a lot of exposure," he says. "*By making wine, you tell a story.*"

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