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Virginia importer buys Napa's Havens Wine Cellars for undisclosed price

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES - 9:34 AM PDT TUESDAY

BY [Chris Rauber](#)

[Billington Imports](#), a Virginia-based wine importer and investor, said Monday it has acquired the [Havens Wine Cellars](#) brand for an undisclosed amount.

The sale of Napa's Havens to Springfield, Va.-based Billington includes the brand name and inventories. The winery, founded in 1984, was an early pioneer of Carneros wines, most notably merlot, officials said.

Founder and winemaker Michael Havens is joining Billington to continue his role as winegrower for Havens Wine Cellars, as well as collaborating on other ventures. "After 23 years making wine in the Napa Valley, I look forward to again focusing on the vineyard and cellar, and relying on Billington's proven sales team," Havens said in an Aug. 14 statement.

The deal was brokered by Robert Nicholson of Healdsburg-based [International Wine Associates](#), who served as Havens' exclusive strategic and financial advisor.

Billington has created a new division called Billington Wine Studio to coordinate production and/or marketing of wines in which Billington or the Bartholomaus Family has invested.

The Havens brand joins an existing portfolio that includes several California brands, including Lily and Screaming Jack, as well as brands acquired from Windsor's [Sin E Wine Co.](#) in April: Solex, Magnet, Megawatt and Ben Madigan. Billington Wine Studio also will market joint ventures such as Big Tattoo from Chile/Germany; New Zealand's Blind River, and Chasseur wines from Sebastopol's [Hunter Wine Cellars](#).

Billington Imports, founded in 1985 by Alfredo Bartholomaus, helped pioneer the importation of premium wines from Chile and Argentina in the late 1980's and 1990's. Alfredo's son, Alex Bartholomaus, was given control of the company in late 1997, and decided to diversify its import portfolio into other areas such as Spain in 1998, and Germany & Alsace in 2000. In 2002, the company began to make direct investments in joint ventures like Blind River and Big Tattoo, and the Bartholomaus Family invested in Hunter Wine Cellars.

"The acquisition of Havens Wine Cellars and Sin E Wine Company gives us a solid foothold in California wine production, which complements our existing relationship with Hunter Wine Cellars," Alex Bartholomaus said in the statement. "All of these brands give us greater penetration into the on-premise segment of the business, which brings greater opportunity to our existing suppliers and distributors."