

ACUMEN

Acumen Vineyard and Viticulture

In California, a mere three percent of the winegrapes are grown at altitudes above 1,000 feet. These prized mountain vineyards are the source for some of the state's most sought-after fruit, and the wellspring for many of Napa Valley's most iconic wines. Since 2012, Acumen has been dedicated to establishing Napa Valley's next great wine estate. To achieve this goal, Acumen acquired two coveted vineyards on Atlas Peak, in the famed eastern mountain of Napa Valley. Named Attelas and Edcora, these remarkable estate vineyards range in elevation from 1,300 to 1,600 feet, and include 116 acres of vines, with a focus on Cabernet Sauvignon, the four other red Bordeaux varieties, and Sauvignon Blanc. Stewarded by an acclaimed vineyard team led by Viticulturist John Derr and Vineyard Manager Jesus Gonzalez, Attelas and Edcora have emerged as two of the most exciting vineyards in California, yielding mountain-grown wines of consummate depth, complexity and character.

Atlas Peak – Napa Valley's Next Great Frontier for Mountain Wines

"While people like Jan Krupp and the Antinori family have long known about this remarkable region, because of its remoteness, and the costs of farming its high slopes, Atlas Peak isn't as widely known as some mountain AVAs," says Winemaker Phillip Titus. "That's changing." Phillip's beliefs are echoed by Viticulturist John Derr, who has been planting and farming mountain vineyards throughout his storied career. "Atlas Peak is an incredible appellation," says John. "When cultivated with the respect and care that it deserves, it has the potential to rival any of the great appellations in Napa Valley."

Though Atlas Peak has been producing wines of renown since the 1870s, the Atlas Peak American Viticultural Area (AVA) was not officially established until 1992. The AVA encompasses 11,400 acres of land, and currently has approximately 1,500 acres under vine. It is located in Napa Valley's famed eastern mountains. The appellation sits on a higher elevation than most of Napa Valley's wine regions, which limits the effects of the cool fog coming in from the Pacific Ocean. Even so, because of its location, Atlas Peak is regularly cooler than Napa Valley's other mountain AVAs, including Diamond Mountain, Howell Mountain, Spring Mountain and Mount Veeder.

In addition, on a 100-degree afternoon on the valley floor, Attelas and Edcora are typically five-to-10 degrees cooler, greatly reducing the risks of sunburned grapes, berry dehydration or fast-tracked sugar accumulation before the grape flavors have fully matured. At the same time, Atlas Peak has a significant diurnal temperature variation of as much as 50 °F between daytime and night. This refreshes the vines and clusters, helping them to maintain excellent natural acidity and earthy minerality—signatures of Acumen wines.

The region is recognized for its red, rocky volcanic soils that tend to be shallow and well-drained. These soils act as an insulator, retaining a consistent soil temperature even when the air temperature fluctuates—essentially acting like a solar panel, collecting and radiating warmth throughout the day and into the night, well after the sun has set.

Acumen's Attelas and Edcora Estate Vineyards

Acumen's two vineyards, named Attelas and Edcora, total 116 acres of vines, and are located in Foss Valley, an elevated "hanging" valley surrounding Atlas Peak. Thanks to their 1,300-1,650 foot elevations, both vineyards are above the fog line, and are positioned at the southernmost edge of the

Vaca Mountain Range. This location benefits from moderating breezes off San Pablo Bay to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west—breezes that are funneled through narrow canyons ending at Atlas Peak.

Acumen purchased its Attelas Vineyard in 2012. The name Attelas combines the word Atlas with Atelier (an artist's studio). Originally planted in 1992, Attelas was the 'home vineyard' of legendary winegrower Dr. Jan Krupp, and predates his famed Stagecoach Vineyard by three years. Attelas is situated at approximately 1,300 feet, and features 32 acres of vines, planted in volcanic, clay and loam soils as a mosaic of 20 vineyard blocks—including eight blocks and six different clones of Cabernet Sauvignon. Attelas also includes plantings of Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. With a predominantly northeast exposure, Attelas is a cool site in a cooler appellation, making it ideal for Acumen's complex and structured style.

In 2014, Acumen acquired a second estate vineyard with 84 acres of vines higher up on Atlas Peak. This vineyard is named Edcora, which refers to a nearly 6-carat red diamond considered to be the largest red diamond in the world. A half mile away from Attelas, and approximately 350 feet higher up the mountain, Edcora (which neighbors the famed Stagecoach Vineyard) features volcanic soils. With less clay and loam content than Attelas, these shallow, iron-rich soils are the color of red brick, and provide excellent drainage. The soils rest atop a hard layer of dark brown volcanic andesite, which limits vine growth, while concentrating the energy of the vines on ripening the fruit, not leaf and tendril development. This combination yields the small berries and thick skins that are treasured by mountain winemakers.

Edcora is planted to 78 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon spread over 20 individual blocks, 4 acres of Petit Verdot and 2 acres of Cabernet Franc. With a southwest facing exposure, on average Edcora is 10-to-15% warmer than Attelas. Edcora features volcanic soils, an ideal high-elevation climate, and a long growing season. Combined with expert farming, this allows Acumen to produce wines of ideal ripeness, depth, complexity and phenolic concentration. Together, Attelas and Edcora provide the Acumen team with all five of the Bordeaux red varieties for blending.

The farming at Attelas and Edcora is guided by Viticulturist John Derr and gifted Vineyard Manager Jesus Gonzalez, who lives onsite, and oversees Acumen's fulltime vineyard team, which includes some of Napa Valley's top pruners. This seasoned team applies a meticulous approach that includes individual handwork on every vine approximately 15 times in a growing season, with every acre of vines receiving approximately 300 hours of attention each vintage. Combining this intimate approach to farming, with a belief in environmental stewardship, Attelas and Edcora have been cultivated organically since 2014, and earned CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) certification in 2016.

In addition to applying a remarkably detail-oriented approach to farming, Acumen has been replanting both vineyards in small sections using state-of-the-art soil preparation methods, trellising, irrigation and row orientation methods. This includes diagonal row orientations to moderate sunlight, drought tolerant rootstocks, and creating the ideal light environment on the vines through meticulous pruning. As a result, each grape receives approximately 30 minutes of direct sunshine a day. The Acumen team is also pioneering cutting-edge canopy and water management techniques to cultivate smaller berries that achieve phenolic ripeness, with freshness and no pyrazines. At the same time, the size of the berries results in a smaller skin-to-juice ratio, yielding greater color and intensity.

With 116 acres of vines, Acumen uses only approximately 10% of its estate fruit, which allows the winemaking team to select their favorite blocks and rows to make Acumen's wines, with the remaining grapes prized by a who's who of elite Napa Valley winery clients.