



**B L A C K B I R D  
V I N E Y A R D S**

**Michael Polenske**

Blackbird Vineyards | Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley | I. Wolk Gallery | Recuerdo Wines

Michael Polenske is intently devoted to “the business of leisure.” In acquiring Blackbird Vineyards in 2003 and turning it into an ultra premium label, Polenske brings to the venture his proven flair for combining individual talents into a highly effective team.

Polenske was born in Bermuda to a father who worked as a hurricane hunter and later worked in the Presidential Support Squadron responsible for piloting Air Force One and Two under President Nixon. After an itinerant early childhood, Polenske’s first exposure to wine came with family trips to California’s wine country. Polenske’s family was later transferred to Travis Air Force Base near Napa Valley, where he spent most of his youth.

While majoring in finance at Chico State, Polenske complemented his economic studies with wine classes. His original intention was to provide financial services to the vintners of the Napa Valley, but by happenstance he was assigned to Silicon Valley, where he found himself working for e-gurus amid the burgeoning technology boom of the eighties and nineties.

In his 20 years of investment management, Polenske observed the fact that many of his clients preferred investments that reflect their personal interests. Applying the same principle to himself, he displayed an impressive sensitivity to the prevailing zeitgeist. He became a founding investor of New York’s storied Soho House, the private club and hotel whose rooftop swimming pool was prominently featured in the TV show, *Sex and the City*. Another of his interests, Boulettes Larder in San Francisco, is an epicurean restaurant devoted to organic fare, embracing the slow food movement. Among his other interests are The Vines of Mendoza in Argentina; Taylor’s Refresher in San Francisco, St. Helena and Napa; Terzo, a sister restaurant to the acclaimed Rose Pistola; and an import business Patina Atelier Antiques which carries European art and furnishings.

Polenske, with the addition of Curator to his résumé, foresees building a synergistic relationship between his former ventures and his latest enterprise, Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley—“a life aesthetic.” Opened in the town of Yountville in the fall of 2008, Ma(i)sonry allows guests to appreciate or acquire art and furnishings, all while sampling artisan wines from collective winery partners, including Blackbird Vineyards.

In January of 2010, Polenske acquired the I. Wolk Gallery in St. Helena, as well as the sculpture gardens located at Auberge Du Soleil in Rutherford and MacArthur Place in Sonoma, CA. The I. Wolk Gallery will merge with Ma(i)sonry to serve as Napa Valley’s premier destination for the appreciation of world class works of art and design. In 2011, Polenske launched Recuerdo Wines with The Vines of Mendoza. Recuerdo Wines offer wine lovers one-of-a-kind, exclusive wine experiences both north and south of the equator.

Philanthropically active, Polenske is a councilmember of the Woodrow Wilson Center, a nonpartisan think-tank in Washington, D.C., and a board member of the Russian National Orchestra. He is also helping to organize the inaugural Festival Del Sole Napa Valley, a sister festival to the Tuscan Sun Festival in Cortona, Italy, which celebrates the art of life with components of music, art, food and wine.

Through September of 2006, Polenske served as a Managing Director of Quellos, focusing on financial and investment activities of private clients. Prior to Quellos, he was a Managing Director at Mezzacappa Management, LLC, an investment management firm. Before joining Mezzacappa, Polenske was President and Chief Executive Officer of Chase Manhattan Bank & Trust Co., N.A., heading up the private banking business in the Western U.S. Polenske joined Chase Manhattan Corporation from J.P. Morgan, where he served as the head of the private banking group’s west coast/north region. Prior to J.P. Morgan, he was the Managing Principal of the San Francisco region for American Express Financial Advisors and was co-founder of both the San Mateo and San Francisco offices.