



Our Founder: Jeff O'Neill

Jeff O'Neill has always had a fascination and love affair with race cars and, even as a child, hoped to own some of his own historic racing cars one day. His father's love for cars inspired him, and the young boy had a fondness for racing and historical cars in particular. In 2007, O'Neill's dream came true, and he bought a 1957 Maserati 250F Formula One car. He soon became an active member of the racing and automotive event community and today owns many storied race cars, including a Ford GTLM, a Maserati 350S and Maserati Birdcage. Ultimately, O'Neill realized that many events had shifted from high level motorsports exhibitions to either more static displays, or events with non-authentic vehicles. He decided to leverage his passion and expertise to create something that would truly honor and showcase the heritage of these cars and the driving experience.

In 2019, O'Neill founded the Sonoma Speed Festival, an auto racing event that showcased the evolution of motorsports technology and ingenuity. It was important to O'Neill that the event was a family-friendly, curated showcase that would combine the best food, wine and motorsports. His goal was to introduce a new generation of enthusiasts to a hobby that many of us have been involved in for decades. At the inaugural race, O'Neill gathered 220 cars which were all period racing cars with authentic racing history.

After a COVID-forced pause in 2020, the event came back in 2021 with a vengeance (and a new name). The Velocity Invitational moved to the WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca in California's Monterey Peninsula as a jam-packed three-day weekend filled with hundreds of iconic race cars, historic racing, special exhibitions, food and wine. More than 10,000 guests attended Velocity Invitational throughout the weekend along with the livestream of the event being shared with over 600,000 viewers. For 2022, the Velocity Invitational returns to Laguna Seca October 14-16th for what is sure to be the new standard in automotive lifestyle events.

Prior to O'Neill's success with the Velocity Invitational, he was best known for his business in the wine industry. In 2004, he founded O'Neill Vintners and Distillers with a purpose: to create unrivaled relationships that successfully build brands and businesses. O'Neill Vintners & Distillers has grown to become the seventh largest winery in the United States, specializing in national brands, exclusive label wines, and premium wine and spirits production.

Over the past decade, O'Neill has acquired leading national brands including Robert Hall Winery and Line 39 Wines and has launched Day Owl Rosé, Harken Wines, and Charles Woodson's Intercept, increasing total production to almost 850,000 9-liter cases, delivering wines in categories consumers are demanding at great quality and value. In addition, O'Neill produces exclusive label wine and spirits and is part-owner of the popular Ram's Gate Winery in Sonoma, California.

An industry leader in sustainability, recently O'Neill installed the largest worm-powered wastewater system in the world at the Parlier winery facility near Fresno, California. This new system allows the winery to recycle 80 million gallons of water a year. O'Neill sources energy from 2,500 solar panels, spanning 52,200 square feet, to provide 880,000 kWh of energy each year, enough to support the bottling line and air-conditioned warehouse. O'Neill is especially proud to be on target to achieve his goal of 100% sustainably farmed grape sourcing, a longtime effort in coordination with each of the 175 contracted California AVA growers. O'Neill Vintners & Distillers is certified with the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program.