

Heitz Cellar

Carlton McCoy, Jr. MS
President & CEO



Growing up in southeast Washington, DC, Carlton McCoy's upbringing was an unlikely springboard for his meteoric rise in the wine industry. Named a Master Sommelier in 2013 at just 28 years old, Carlton was one of the youngest people and the second African American to earn this prestigious title.

At home, Carlton's family preferred beer or whiskey and he had little exposure to wine. But food was another story: Carlton spent years at his grandmother's side in the family's catering business, learning kitchen basics, prepping vegetables and eventually cooking as well. "My grandma was an amazing cook," he says,

"and she was by far the leading influence behind my career in the restaurant business."

Motivated to build on his interest in the culinary arts, in high school Carlton enrolled in a class sponsored by the Careers Through Culinary Arts Program, or C-CAP. In 2002, he won a C-CAP citywide cooking contest and earned a full scholarship to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. At the CIA, something new stood out for him: "The wine class with Steven Kolpan was a revelation to me," he explains. "It opened my eyes to a completely new world. I went to all the tutoring sessions to learn as much as I could about wine."

After graduation in 2006, Carlton honed his skills in revered institutions including Thomas Keller's Per Se, Marcus Samuelsson's Aquavit, Tom Colicchio's Craft Steak in New York and Eric Zeibold's CityZen at The Mandarin Oriental in Washington, DC. It was at CityZen that he got serious about wine and began studying for the Court of Master Sommeliers certifications, guided by Andy Myers MS. "He's the person in this industry who changed my life," Carlton states. "He was the first person to take me under his wing and tell me that I may have a future in this."

In 2011, Carlton joined the team at The Little Nell in Aspen, CO, inspired by the hotel's award-winning wine program and reputation at a training ground for Master Sommeliers. After earning the MS title in 2013, he was promoted to Wine Director, overseeing a staff of 150 and The Little Nell's acclaimed 20,000-bottle wine cellar.

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Carlton became President and CEO of Heitz Cellar in December 2018. To Carlton, Heitz Cellar represents a very particular style of Napa wines: ones that speak to an earlier era in California winemaking. His vision will highlight the winery's consistent focus on remaining true to its elegant, pure style. "There has to be reverence when it comes to these older brands that create the greatest wines in the country," he states. "It is fortunate that the Heitz family believed in that style and didn't change it over the years. It makes the wines the unique experience that they are."

As a Master Sommelier, Carlton is well versed in the fine wines of the world and is also keenly attuned to recognizing the icons closer to home. "As Americans, we have to look at wines like Heitz as national treasures," he says. "We go all over the world looking for other wines when we have this incredible legacy right here at home. It's a great honor to be steward of such an iconic, historical brand."

Adventurous and athletic, Carlton enjoys traveling the world in search of great wine and spirits and pursuing physically challenging outdoor activities including biking and running marathons.

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