



### **Highly Recommended Wineries**

#### **Chateau Montelena - Calistoga - Dennis & Corey**

Most fortunately, we were present for the launch of the '94 Cab. As expected, the 94 was extremely tight but the future holds great promise for this gem. As an added treat, a vertical tasting was available, offering the 90, 91, 92 cabs. All tasted excellent, however my palette ranked them best first: 91, 92, 90. As always, very professional and personable!

*Favorite Wine* - 91 Cabernet Sauvignon "Wicked YUMMY"

#### **Duckhorn - Napa - Tony, Tom & Monica**

Wow! Yummy! Oh, did I mention yummy? It required some doing but we managed to sync our schedules to get a tour. Having no expectations we were awed as we were taken though the facility after filling our glasses out of the stainless steel tank that housed the 97 Sauvignon Blanc (by the way... Yummy!) From room to room we were spoiled by one fabulous wine after another out of the barrels and into our glasses. The only other winery (with a wide selection) that can boast all great wines is DeLorimier. What a wonderful treat... did I say YUMMY?

*Favorite Wine* - So good... one cannot choose! Awesome!

#### **DeLorimier - Alexander Valley - Kimberly Wright**

Fun & casual. Kimberly is vibrantly candid! She pours all great wines. There is not a mediocre wine in the bunch! DeLorimier needs no words... just taste the wine!

*Favorite Wine* - Sangiovese

#### **Caymus - Rutherford - Michelle**

Not enough can be said. Caymus recently changed its tasting practice from open to the public, to appointment only. My past experiences, when open to the public, were disappointing. However, our appointment was magnificent. Upon gaining entree past the electronic gate, we were pleasantly greeted by the lovely Caymus host, Michelle. We were led to a room where before us stood a long table fit for the Last Supper adorned with wineglasses inviting us to be seated. As many of you have read the Sauvignon Blanc is second to none, except of course to the Conundrum that followed! But that was just the beginning, we then advanced to the Zinfandel which has a different character than traditional zins and quite good. The pinnacle of the tasting began with the pouring of the exalted Special Selection and ended with a guest appearance of Charlie Wagner, winery founder. Despite his age Charlie was witty, charming and quite entertaining!

*Favorite Wine* - Special Selection

#### **Mt. Veeder (@ Franciscan) - Rutherford-Janet Pagano**

Other mention is Bill Love & Monica! We arrived late in the day, but service was superior! Mt Veeder wines are clearly the favorites, with a few Franciscan surprises. Great art work and a grand selection of "YUMMY" wines! Look for the new winery tasting room opening soon at Mt Veeder.

*Favorite Wine* - 93 Mt. Veeder Reserve

#### **Jordan - Alexander Valley - Lisbeth**

Elegance and grace extend from the grounds... the facility... the experience... and of course the wines. Relaxing tour in a chateau style environment followed by a tasting with casual pretentiousness. Such an atmosphere begs one to quote a man from my adolescent days: "I wonder what the poor people are doing?" You'll surely leave feeling with your life enriched! Lisbeth left us with her thoughts, "After 3 months of learning how to pair wine with food... I learned that I loved wine and food... not much more"

*Favorite Wine* - Cabernet Sauvignon

#### **Grgich Hills - St. Helena - Dave Mosher**

Once again, extremely fun, great jokes (thankfully, political correctness has not yet reached Dave), great wine & excellent orchestration of the tour. Very personable & down to earth (I need to mention Maui & Makina Surf).

*Favorite Wine* - Chardonnay & Fume Blanc

#### **Beringer - St Helena - Stan (Founders Room)**

Recently gone public, some of the rules have changed, however the wines in the founders room are still excellent. The founders room can get a bit expensive as each wine may cost between \$2 and \$5. The staff is very professional, well trained and extremely knowledgeable. Greatest number & variety of great wines!

*Favorite Wine* - *Tough choice*... Howell Mountain Merlot

#### **Neibaum Coppola - Rutherford - Robert & Kelly**

The manager Mike Gunn needs to be mentioned as his hospitality and professionalism were second to none. Despite the formalities that Jason spoke about on our last tour to Coppola, once again our experience was delightful. Once the tasting commences, one feels as if they are in a European home sharing wine and conversation. Nice selection of wines, zin is good but a different style (took 7<sup>th</sup> out of 10 in a "Snob" blind tasting, see Snob Vol. X for details. FYI, there was not a bad one in the bunch!). Favorite quote from Scott McCloud (winemaker), "...variety percentages are not as important as the synergies created between the grapes"

*Favorite Wine* - Rubicon

#### **Silver Oak - Oakville - Tom Walsh**

Return to Silver Oak.... Ahhhh.... This time to be treated with three fine wines. The Napa and the Alexander Valley cabs and a delicious zinfandel port. All wines were great! The service was excellent and the conversation was pleasant.

*Favorite Wine* - *of course*, Cabernet Sauvignon

#### **Vincent Arroyo - Calistoga - Vincent, & Joy**

As luck would have it, our visit was timed perfectly to enjoy a grand barrel tasting. We were the first visitors arriving shortly after breakfast, just in time to tease our palettes with several examples, right out of the barrel. There were at least 6 barrels to taste from with a few obscure varietals. All delicious, the search for a favorite took a few strenuous passes.

*Favorite Wine* - Petite Syrah

### **Groth - Napa - TJ**

What a great structure! If only it weren't raining! The tasting was very nice and personable. Fortunately or unfortunately, the red wines sell so well there was none left for tasting. Feel free to visit them at [grothwines@aol.com](mailto:grothwines@aol.com)

*Favorite Wine* - Sauvignon Blanc

### **Cosentino - Yountville - Carole & Colette (mgr.)**

It was an unusually sunny day in the year of El Niño, so the spirits were high this early morning. The banter was both challenging and fun. Of course the wonderful hosts serving very nice wines pleasantly enhanced the rhetoric. When asked for a quote, "...learn how to say the damn name!" with specific reference to Merlot! FYI: Merlots were very tasty!

*Favorite Wine* - M. Coz

### **Merryvale - Rutherford- Katie**

It took some doing to get to the right attendant, but once accomplished we were treated with class. Obviously Profile stole the show but the other wines fared very well.

*Favorite Wine* - Profile

### **Villa Mt Eden/Conn Creek - Rutherford - Mgmt team**

The appointment was assumed to be for Conn Creek. Our original opinion of Villa Mt. Eden was it was fair, but certainly not our preference. Much to our pleasant surprise, Villa Mt Eden produced a few fine wines, especially the Pinots (2), that were quite impressive. Of course the Conn Creek wines were on average, superior. However there were extraordinary instances where Villa Mt Eden Wines were on par or superior. Our hosts, Anne Salazar & Lisa Turnidge were very hospitable and her enthusiasm was inspiring.

*Favorite Wine* - Anthology

### **Domaine Chandon - Napa - Kelly**

Despite arrival at near closing time we were pleasantly greeted and accommodated by Kelly. My favorite is the Blanc de Noir and as always it lived up to my expectations. The reputation of Domaine Chandon is such that the restaurant is second to none. In order to taste one must pay for a glass or a bottle... it is suggested that you go as a group and purchase a bottle.

*Favorite Wine* - Blanc de Noir

### **Clos du Val - Napa - David Meagher**

Yummy cabs! We arrived late but still received awesome treatment, as we tasted several delicious examples of red wine. An extra treat during our visit included a sister winery offering! A Syrah based wine from Australia (Taltarni). The cabs were awesome and the Sangiovese was good also. Very personable... Knowledgeable beyond any expectations, and very accommodating. It was the end to a perfect day!

*Favorite Wine* - Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

### **Joseph Phelps - Napa - Trey Blankenship**

Coincidentally, Trey was back! Our second visit to Phelps and both times we had the pleasure of Trey. The tour and tasting is an event with Trey. If you have the time, make an appointment. If you don't have the time, make the time!

*Favorite Wine* - Merlot

## **Recommended Wineries**

### **Newton**

Well... they have lots of flowers... they have pretty grounds... they have nice wines... they just don't serve them to the public! After a great effort shuffling my schedule in order to get an appointment; I was very disappointed to not taste the unfiltered Chardonnay nor the Merlot. Both wines reside in my cellar and I hoped for the opportunity to taste and hear their thoughts on the wine longevity and other interesting anecdotes. They serve only the cheap stuff, which is good but nothing to write home about.

*Favorite Wine* - Take the fifth!

### **Edgewood - Rutherford - Joe, Philip, Christine**

Philip poured for us as Joe played the role of wine poet, "better to drink to year early than a day late" Nice time. Hospitable

*Favorite Wine* - Cabernet Sauvignon & Port

### **Monthaven - Rutherford (@Edgewood)**

Cab Franc is nice and Sangiovese light & fruity & broad

*Favorite Wine* - Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

### **Burgess - St. Helena - Shari & Phyllis**

Not bad wine... great library selection. The zins and whites need work but the cabs hold their own. Beware of Opra the dog, she hates to be pet, the pompous little bitch!

*Favorite Wine* - Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

## **Other Wineries**

### **Steltzner - Napa**

Interesting that they can attract the public, as they charge a fee to taste nothing but sour grapes! YUCKY!!!

### **Dear Park- Rutherford- Joe Lewis**

"The lover, not the fighter, the fighter is dead" Obviously this is a fun visit. The wines can be good but the consistency from wine to wine and year to year is non-existent

*Favorite Wine* - Petite Syrah