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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

OVER A BARREL

What Oak Aging Imparts

**Romantic Getaways and
Where to Wine and Dine**

**How to Get the Most Out
of a Visit to a Winery**

**The Vinous Secrets of
Australia's Clare Valley**

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

How to Get the Most Out of a Winery Visit

By Robert Johnson

“Wine country,” in some form or another, now exists in all 50 states. Yes, wine is even produced in Alaska and Hawaii.

Visiting a winery is a great activity around which to build a vacation. But to get the most out of a winery visit, you need to do a little planning and take advantage of all that the winery has to offer visitors.

Follow these five tips, and your winery visit is guaranteed to be a memorable experience...

1. Do your homework. If you enjoy white wines only, you don't want to waste your vacation time at an estate that specializes in red wines. Most wineries have websites with a "store" or "shop" function where you can see a list of all the wines made.

2. Verify directions ahead of time. The maps published in wine country periodicals are notoriously inaccurate. Even Google Maps and Mapquest can sometimes provide incorrect directions simply because there are so many small roads and roads with similar names. If you have any doubt about the location of a winery, call ahead.



3. Take a tour. It's a great way to learn more about a winery, its history, the philosophy of the owners and the winemaker, and winemaking in general. Plus, at many

estates, those on tours get to taste wines that other visitors do not — including, at some wineries, right out of the barrel.

4. Ask questions. It's the best way to learn about wine and the winemaking process. There are no stupid questions; over the years, winery owners, winemakers, tour givers and tasting room personnel have heard them all... and then some.

5. Take notes. Especially at wineries that produce numerous bottlings, it's easy to get confused. You can jot down detailed tasting descriptions, or simply make a note of the wines you really like. That way, you'll take home the right bottles when it's time to get back on the road.



Over a Barrel: The Role of Oak in Winemaking

The aromas and flavors we experience in wine come not just from grapes, but also from winemaking processes and the vessels in which a specific wine is aged.

When vintners wish the nuances of the grapes and nothing else to show through, they typically opt for stainless steel tanks for aging. These tanks are considered “neutral,” imparting no aromas or flavors of their own to the finished product.

But when additional complexity in the finished wine is the goal, oak barrels may be the aging vessels of choice. But as all experienced winemakers know, the aromas and flavors imparted by barrels vary widely based upon a given barrel’s place of origin and how it was “seasoned” — a process known as “toasting.”

Here are five fascinating facts about the role barrels play in winemaking...

1. We often hear vintners sing the praises of French oak barrels, but barrels for aging wine are made from oak grown in Hungary, Slovenia and even Missouri, in addition to other locales around the world.



2. Depending on the type of oak and where it was grown, it will impart unique flavors. For instance, American oak is known for imparting a coconut-like flavor, whereas French oak is coveted for the spice characteristic it imparts.

3. “Toasting” is a procedure that helps soften the wood-like nuances of oak barrels. It’s accomplished by exposing the inside of the barrel to a flame.

4. If a vintner wants the oak notes to play a big role in the overall flavor of the wine, he or she may opt to not only age the wine in oak, but to ferment it in oak as well.

5. Conversely, if the vintner wishes to limit the oak influence, one way is to re-use barrels. Each time a barrel is refilled with a new vintage of wine, the “oakiness” subsides. After enough fills, a barrel will be rendered “neutral” — just like a stainless steel tank.

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Febbruary is the month of romance. (Need we remind you of the significance of February 14?) It's the month when we enjoy a special evening with our Significant Other or, at the very least, plan a romantic getaway with that person for later in the year.

Sonoma County provides no shortage of romantic winery destinations — estates around which one can plan a most pleasurable and memorable experience. Three of our favorite Sonoma destinations are Paradise Ridge Winery, Passalacqua Winery and Gloria Ferrer Caves and Vineyards.

"A visit to Paradise Ridge Winery in the daytime is lovely," notes the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "On summer nights with the view and the sunset, it's a special treat."

The perfect combination of romance, family values and rich European tradition inspired the dream of Paradise Ridge, which graces a hillside over the city of Santa Rosa. When Walter Byck married Marijke Hoenselaars in Holland in 1961, little did they realize that together they would build a wine estate in the heart of one of the world's finest grape-growing regions.

Walter and Marijke moved to Santa Rosa in 1965 and realized they had found a haven to raise their growing family. In 1978, after more than a year of searching for a ranch where their five children could camp, hike and fish, Walter came home one night, rain dripping from his coat, and said, "Marijke, children... I have seen paradise!" Thereafter, the 156 acres of land above the Russian River Valley became known as Paradise Ranch.

Today, its unique California design

welcomes visitors with a European-styled courtyard, leaf-shaped deck, expansive verandas and a terra cotta terrace. Guests also can enjoy breathtaking views of the vineyards and the Russian River Valley from the distinctive indoor/outdoor tasting bar. The beautiful and serene setting also provides the perfect atmosphere for joyful brides and grooms to exchange their wedding vows.

Each Wednesday from May through mid-October, Paradise Ridge hosts "Wines & Sunsets," showcasing local food vendors and live music, all while enjoying spectacular sunsets from the winery's expansive veranda and beautiful terrace.

Passalacqua Winery is a family-owned wine estate in Healdsburg,



where wine has been made by five generations.

The story of the Passalacqua family in the United States goes back to 1865, when Francesco Passalacqua emigrated from Genoa, landing in San Francisco and settling in Healdsburg, where he immediately planted grapes. In 1895, he opened Fitch Mountain Cellars. The original house and half-acre of grapes still stand on Fitch Street in downtown Healdsburg.

In 1930, Francesco's widow, Rachel, purchased the Oliveto Wine Company in downtown Healdsburg, and in 1933 her daughter Edith opened Sonoma County Cellars in the building. Edith was one of the first women to make wine and to own and operate a winery in California after Prohibition, and she did so until



Passalacqua Winery

her retirement in 1958. Aunt Edith's original label design graces each bottle of Passalacqua's Estate Zinfandel.

In 1979, third-generation Tom Passalacqua and his wife Sandi purchased a 300-acre ranch off Mill Creek Road, at the southern tip of Dry Creek Valley. They planted one-third to Cabernet Sauvignon in 1996. In 2000, their son Jason, inspired by the Cabernet acreage and the families' history, began making wine.

The current property on Lambert Bridge Road opened as Passalacqua Winery in 2004, with a tasting room showcasing Zinfandel from select vineyards in Dry Creek Valley and Cabernet Sauvignon from the family's TR Passalacqua Vineyard.

The winery offers sweeping vineyard views and comfortable seating areas to explore Passalacqua wines, including a tasting deck and private-access gardens.

The wines of Gloria Ferrer Caves &



Gloria Ferrer Caves and Vineyards

Vineyards, while always well received, have continued to improve over 25 growing seasons in Sonoma. The family legacy of uncompromising quality is passed down through generations, and the patience-testing *méthode champenoise* process of aging and blending is paramount.

Gloria Ferrer is a unique, beautiful, memorable and welcoming place for couples, and many have exchanged vows beneath the estate's grapevine-covered arbor. Imagine dancing the night away under a star-studded sky overlooking the vineyards... raising a glass of exceptional sparkling wine made on the premises... and dining on elegant cuisine provided by local chefs — comfortable in the knowledge that Gloria Ferrer's professional event staff is attending to every detail.

No wonder it's one of Sonoma County's most popular destinations — for weddings, Valentine's Day or any romantic occasion.

Winery 4-1-1

Paradise Ridge Winery

4545 Thomas Lake Harris Dr.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
707-528-9463

Passalacqua Winery

3805 Lambert Bridge Rd.
Healdsburg, CA 95448
707-433-5550

Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards

23555 Arnold Dr.
Sonoma, CA 95476
707-996-7256

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How to Make an Ultra-Getaway Even More 'Ultra'



Restaurant Mark Greenaway

Last year about this time, USA Today ran a feature story titled, “Sweet Dreams: Valentine’s Day Ultra-Getaways.” It shined the spotlight on five dreamy destinations in Edinburgh, Miami, Buenos Aires, Paris and Los Angeles.

We’ve selected three of those destinations and added our own wining-and-dining recommendations. Check out guidebooks for Paris and Los Angeles dining ideas. For the other three, read the original USA Today story (go online to <http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2014/02/07/valentines-day-romantic-getaway-for-two/5257107/>), and then consider the following culinary options...

EDINBURGH

Restaurant Mark Greenaway is both elegant and exciting — one of those rare dining rooms that manages to induce a sense of calm while encouraging anticipation. Named one of the top 100 restaurants in the United Kingdom, it provides diners with a meal to remember.

With a passion for Scottish ingredients, Greenaway makes use of modern techniques to enhance flavors, and his innovative presentation style results in a feast for the eyes.

A three-course Market Menu is served during lunch and early evening hours, as well as a la carte selections. At night, an indulgent eight-course Tour Menu is featured, and all of the courses can be enhanced with matched wines.

Restaurant Mark Greenaway, 69 North Castle Street, Edinburgh, United Kingdom EH2 3LJ.

MIAMI

Café Boulud is at the heart of the historic Brazilian Court Hotel, steps from Worth Avenue and stretches of white sandy beach.

Since opening in 2003, the restaurant has become one of Palm Beach’s most coveted dining destinations, earning four stars in the *Forbes Travel Guide*, along with *Wine Spectator’s* “Best of Award of Excellence.”

The lounge is a must for cocktails before dinner, and the terrace and private dining rooms are the places to be entertained in style, throw a lavish event or host a memorable wedding day. The French-American menu



TOURING TIPS

parallels that of Café Boulud New York with a touch of South Florida resort flavor.

The philosophy behind the wine list at Café Boulud is to offer the neighborhood and international clientele a broad selection of styles, regions and price ranges, while concentrating on wines that are very versatile. The list is greatly influenced by varietal character and the reflection of terroir in any given wine, meaning that the restaurant searches for wines that best represent the true flavors of the grapes from which they’re made and the regions where they’re grown.

While the focus on French and American wines reflects the main influences of the Café, the 400-selection list spans the globe with representation from all major wine



Café Boulud

regions. One of the challenges, and certainly one of the most enjoyable aspects, of the wine list at Café Boulud, is finding wines to match the dynamic and ever-changing menu, and servers are well trained to suggest both safe and imaginative bottlings. *Café Boulud, The Brazilian Court, 301 Australian Ave., Palm Beach, FL 33480.*

BUENOS AIRES

At Don Julio Parrilla in the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires, you'll encounter wine glasses showing off velvety renditions of Malbec, servers who know the menu and can describe each dish down to the smallest of ingredients, and a long list of specialties to satisfy any palate.

Among the delectable options are Chorizo Don Julio (chorizo, mozzarella and rehydrated dried tomatoes), Asado (barbecue), Rib Eye Steak, Thin Skirt, Rump Steak, White Chocolate Cheesecake with Passion Fruit Sauce, and Flambéed Nut-Filled Figs with Whipped Cream and Vanilla Ice Cream.

Often, servers will point to cuts sizzling on the grill when answering questions, as the dining room faces an open kitchen. Adding to the ambience, especially for us wine lovers: walls lined with empty wine bottles that have been signed by the guests who drank them.

Don Julio Parrilla, Guatemala St. 4691, Palermo Viejo, C.A.B.A., Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Don Julio Parrilla

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wyoming Wine Bar.

You're more likely to associate Wyoming with wide open spaces and buffalo than with wine and tapas. But in the city of Jackson, former Chicago restaurateur Gavin Fine is working to change that perception at Bin 22, a wine bar that serves delicious tapas. Simply buy a bottle of vino at the wine shop, and then have it opened with your dinner for no additional charge. www.jhfinedining.com

2 Hot/Cold Champagne Bar.

Hot and cold? Yes, considering The Oasis is a mobile bar that moves from location to location during the ski season on Aspen Mountain. Skiers learn about the current location via Facebook and/or Twitter, then converge to enjoy caviar and Champagne on lounge chairs. www.thelittlenell.com

3 Hot Educational Website.

One of the world's most famous wine regions also is one of the most daunting to understand. We speak of the French appellation of Bordeaux, which produces some of the most coveted bottlings of red and sweet white wine. Now, a new generation of vintners is raising the bar even higher, producing wines in their own unique styles while adhering to generations-old laws and traditions. This new website helps wine lovers sort through it all. www.bordeaux.com/discover



Acidity. The cause of a wine's tart or tangy flavor (when the acidity level is high). Can help make a wine (especially white) refreshing.

Body. The "weight" of a wine in one's mouth. Can range from light-bodied (typical of many whites) to full-bodied (typical of many reds).

Cava. Spanish sparkling wine, made in the French style, typically from some combination of Xarello, Macabeo and Parellada grapes.

Douro. A famous wine region in Portugal known for producing Port wines.

Enology. The science of wine production — practiced by enologists, and enjoyed by enophiles.

Finish. The flavor that remains in one's mouth after swallowing wine. A long finish is associated with high quality.

VINESSE STYLE



If you're serious about your significant other — really serious — you should have a pretty good idea about their favorite kind of flower.

Anyone can buy a dozen roses for Valentine's Day and be off the hook, but you can score major romance points by tailoring the floral gift to the recipient on the most romantic of Hallmark holidays.

According to data compiled by the Society of American Florists, the most popular Valentine's Day floral gift is red roses. The second most popular is a mixed bouquet, followed by other colors of roses.

For a truly stylish Valentine's Day gift, consider giving not only flowers, but also wine. And to show you've really put some thought into it, select complementary flowers and wines.

Many wines include a floral note in their aroma spectrum. To help you

with your shopping, here's a list of popular flower types, along with the wine types that often have a similar aroma:

- Rose — Gamay, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese and Gewurztraminer.
- Geranium — Gewurztraminer, Moscato, Torrontes, Malbec and Petit Verdot.
- Citrus — Viognier, Riesling, Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc.
- White Flowers (such as Lily) — Pinot Grigio, Semillon and Torrontes.
- Violet — Malbec, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Mourvedre.
- Lavender — Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, Tempranillo and Sangiovese.



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

Clare Valley, Australia



The roots of the Clare Valley's winemaking history have been growing for more than 150 years, making it one of Australia's oldest wine-producing regions.

The unique combination of geography, geology and climate results in terroir that is perfect for producing world-class wine. It's little wonder that the country's wine pioneers chose this little corner of South Australia upon which to stake their names.

With five separate sub-regions, the Clare Valley is an expanse of sweeping gullies and rolling hills. During the grapes' growing season, the days are warm and the nights are cool. It's this diurnal temperature range — from as much as 40 degrees C in the day, to only 5 degrees C at night — along with the character-forming "terra rossa" soil that makes the valley equally favorable for producing superb Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, as well as Riesling that has been acclaimed as some of the best in the world.

The Clare Valley plays a vital role in the quality of winemaking. It's essential to everything, from the way the grapes develop on the vine, to the taste and color of the wine, making each vineyard much more than just a plot of land.

Sevenhill Cellars is the oldest

winery in the region. Jesuits built it in 1851 and started making sacramental wine. Now, it also produces premium white, red and fortified wines. Its wine and history make Sevenhill a favorite "cellar door" to visit.

Reilly's Wines is located in an original stone and slate building, built by Hugh Reilly in 1856. This building is now utilized as a tasting room and restaurant, offering visitors fresh, locally produced food, matched with dry-grown wines. It's open for lunch seven days a week.

Paulett Wines is in Polish Hill River Valley. Winemaker Neil Paulett started his career at Penfolds and has more than 30 years' experience. He makes wines of finesse, elegance and intensity, and the views from the cellar door are breathtaking.

Knappstein is a small producer of premium wines. Its Riesling is among Australia's best, and its cellar door is in a 19th-century brewery.

Annie's Lane produces one of Australia's finest ranges of wine. The winery has won hundreds of awards. A cellar door, museum and art gallery are open daily.

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Q A friend of mine insists on serving white wine in one type of wine glass (kind of thin, but not as thin as a Champagne flute), and red wine in another type. What’s the purpose of that? Is it really necessary?



A Necessary? No. You can drink pretty much any kind of wine in any kind of glass. But if you want to get the most out of a particular wine, the shape of the glass does matter. Generally speaking, the bowls of glasses used for red wine are larger and wider. This allows one to swirl the wine aggressively, which helps to release all of its aromas and flavors. As another generality, red wines are more complex than whites, and need that exposure to air to fully reveal themselves. Most wine judges will tell you that you really need only three types of glasses — one for white wines, one for red wines and one for sparkling wines — but the Riedel glass company has developed an entire line of glassware around specific varieties. The line is called Veritas.

“If you could only cook with one spice, your food would get boring; you want a whole spice rack. I use a variety of barrels for the same reason. For example, I work with 10 or 12 coopers for my Cabernets.”



— California winemaker Thomas Brown, quoted in *Food and Wine magazine*

\$134

The average amount spent on Valentine’s Day in 2014, according to the National Retail Federation. Two reminders: 1. Valentine’s Day 2015 is February 14. 2. Don’t forget the wine!

CADE Winery, located in Angwin, Calif., has been described as “America’s greenest winery.” CADE’s philosophy of making luxury wine in harmony with the environment begins in the soil of the 21-acre estate vineyard, where the Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot vines are farmed organically. CADE maintains a painstaking program of natural cultivation that will result in organic certification at the end of the required transition period. “Change is good, green is good, organic is good,” says CADE partner John Conover about the estate’s environmentally proactive approach to winemaking. “We’re doing it because it’s the right thing to do as stewards of the land.” Organic farming is essentially the way that intelligent farmers tended their fields for thousands of years, making the most of their land by constantly renewing it with animal fertilizer, crop rotation and the other good things available to them.



John Conover

That harmony changed abruptly in many agricultural lands in the mid-20th century when chemical pesticides, herbicides and fungicides became widely available. At that time, some grape growers joined other farmers in using the new wonder chemicals to kill insect pests and pump up their plants for bigger crops, not understanding how these fertilizers and poisons would damage their soils and the environment in general. Enlightened wine estate owners today, including CADE, know that going organic in their vineyards makes for healthier soil, more biologically balanced and pest-resistant grapevines, and more natural and complex wines. Organic farming avoids synthetic fertilizers and insecticides, and encourages the use of compost and manure to create soil rich with natural nutrition and beneficial plant and animal life that help sustain the vines from year to year.

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS

The Wines of Winter



“Nature looks dead in winter because her life is gathered into her heart. She withers the plant down to the root so that she may grow it up again fairer and stronger.”

So wrote religious writer Hugh Macmillan in *The Ministry of Nature*, a 19th-century work. It was an observation with which even agnostics could not disagree... even today. Grapevines usually come to mind when that quote is cited, leading to further conjuring over the types of wine we gravitate toward during the cold winter months.

It has been said that February is the price you pay for July, but there are ways of dealing with this most cruel of months — beyond keeping in mind that it will be over before all other months, even in leap years.

When looking for ways to counteract the short, cold days of not just February, but winter in general, we tend to gravitate toward rich, hearty dishes such as stews and casseroles. To match this heart-warming, belly-filling fare, we reach for big, hearty (and almost always red) wines.

A big, spicy bottle of Zinfandel need not be relegated to accompanying barbecued meats during the hot summer months.

Zin also pairs perfectly with stews. And, if you don't care to cook, it also matches nicely with a home-delivered pepperoni pizza.

Other than perhaps sizzling bacon or in-the-oven chocolate chip cookies, nothing makes a house smell better than a slow-cooked roast. Once the meat is no-need-for-a-knife tender, it's time to open a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah.

With cheesy casseroles, one white wine — Chardonnay — is a possibility, but a nice Merlot or Malbec would be even more satisfying.

When cooking with wine during the wintertime, the same basic rule applies: Cook with the wine that you intend to drink with the meal. This will help ensure and even elevate the complementary flavors.

Soon, the winter of 2014-15 will be but a memory. Until then, the wines of winter can help us get through those cold, cruel days that remain before the arrival of spring and the reawakening of the grapevines.

Light & Sweet

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HERB-CRUSTED RACK OF LAMB

Try this dish with Syrah (a.k.a. Shiraz), Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel. This recipe yields 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lbs. Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed
- Kosher salt
- 2 racks of lamb
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds, crushed
- 6 cups watercress leaves with tender stems
- 2 teaspoons Sherry vinegar

Preparation

1. Place potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with 1 inch cold water. Season with salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until tender (about 13 minutes). Drain.
2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Season lamb with salt and pepper.
3. Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook lamb, turning occasionally, until golden brown all over (about 7 minutes). Transfer to a foil-lined baking sheet, placing fat side up.
4. Mix garlic, parsley, dill, mustard, cumin, and 1 Tbsp. oil in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Spread herb mixture over lamb and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of meat registers 130 degrees for medium-rare (about 20 minutes). Transfer to a cutting board and let lamb rest 5 minutes before cutting into double chops.
6. While lamb is resting, heat remaining 1 Tbsp. oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add potatoes and

watercress and cook, tossing, until watercress is just wilted (about 1 minute). Mix in vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Serve lamb with watercress and potatoes.

ASIAN-STYLE HALIBUT

We typically recommend Chardonnay to accompany halibut dishes, but there is nothing typical about this recipe. Instead of Chardonnay, try this dish with Sauvignon Blanc, preferably made without oak aging. This recipe yields 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 small head bok choy, thickly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced lengthwise
- 4 6-oz. halibut fillets
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced on a diagonal
- Zest from 1/2 orange, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 1/2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons grated gingerroot

Preparation

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Tear off four 15-inch squares of aluminum foil and arrange on 2 baking sheets.
2. Divide the bok choy and bell pepper evenly among the squares. Place the halibut fillets on top, sprinkle with black pepper, and top with the scallions and zest.
3. In a small bowl, combine soy sauce, vinegar, oil and ginger. Spoon the mixture evenly over the halibut.
4. Top each fillet with another square of foil and fold the edges over several times to seal. Bake for 15 minutes.
5. Transfer each packet to a plate. Serve with a knife to slit open the package.

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