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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



Summer
in the
Vineyard

Grassini:
A 'Green'
Leader

A Wine
and Music
Getaway

Wining in
Carmel and
Monterey

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

Katie Montgomery

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

A California 1 Wine Adventure

By Robert Johnson

Summertime is a great time to take a drive on Highway 1 — the scenic, occasionally harrowing road that hugs California's Pacific Coast.

Harrowing, in part, because of the hairpin turns and narrow lanes, but even more so because many first-time visitors are trying to drive and soak in the scenery at the same time. But if you can manage to dodge them, you can have a fabulous day of sightseeing, wine tasting and casual dining.

I suggest staying in Monterey, and waking up to breakfast at Loulou's Griddle in the Middle. If you're adventurous, or feel like solidifying your seaside cred, try the Squiddle & Eggs (tender calamari steak, lightly breaded and grilled to a crispy brown, served with eggs as you like them). If you have a sweet tooth, there's only one choice: the chocolate chip "hubcap" griddle cakes (served with butter and syrup).

The nearby (everything is nearby in this quaint town) Monterey Bay Aquarium continues to be a world-class attraction 31 years after it opened. And unlike many aquariums, it requires only a few hours to experience everything it has to offer.

Next, head south toward Carmel, then cut inland (east) on Carmel



Valley Road. Your destination: Cowgirl Winery, where an authentic "western" experience awaits. The tasting room is housed in an old redwood barn, and nine chickens roam the grounds.

For a totally different vibe, head to nearby

Joyce Vineyards, where visitors encounter a 1,700-square-foot industrial urban and contemporary tasting room. Wine can be sampled at a spacious bar or in one of several lounge areas.

You can then head back toward the ocean, check out the shops of Carmel-by-the-Sea, and then unwind with a casual dinner at Monterey's Jeninni Kitchen + Wine Bar. There, you can choose between enticing entrees or small bites, accompanied by a glass of wine from a well curated list. The menu changes daily, but if the Gazpachuelo (clams, white beans and local petrale sole) is available... go for it.

So if you're looking to escape the heat, plan a day, a weekend or a week in California's Monterey and Carmel area. Trust me, you won't run out of fun wineries or fine restaurants to visit.



Summer in the Vineyard: Important Tasks Ahead

Summer is here, and in California, grape growers and winemakers are riding an emotional rollercoaster.

On one hand, they are like other Californians in wishing that one of the worst droughts in the state’s history could be over. On the other hand, they know that too much rain in the summer can wreak havoc on the grape-growing season.

Following bud break in spring, a series of important tasks are undertaken in the vineyard to help ensure healthy and fully ripened grapes at harvest time.

There is the “desuckering” of the vines, removing any non-fruit shoots and encouraging the vine to focus its energies on those that do bear fruit. As the shoots grow, they must be raised from the ground and attached vertically to wires above the main support wires.

Next comes the more detailed task of trellising, which involves separating, or spacing out, the shoots so that they receive maximum light exposure.

This process also encourages air circulation, which helps prevent rot.

After that, it’s a matter of keeping an eye on the vines to make sure they’re not producing too many bunches. If they are, they’ll be trimmed back in order to concentrate aromas and flavors in the remaining grapes.



In this vineyard, it’s almost time to trim back the vine so that the fruit receives sufficient light through the rest of the growing season.

Here’s how the Professional Friends of Wine describe “a perfect wine season”:

- Cool, wet winter provides plenty of ground water.
- Lack of rain or frost after the first warm days of spring.
- Fruit dropped to ensure only a moderate crop load.
- Mild days and cool nights all summer, with no rain or heat wave.
- Vines minimally irrigated and moderately stressed.
- Warm, dry days preceding and during harvest.

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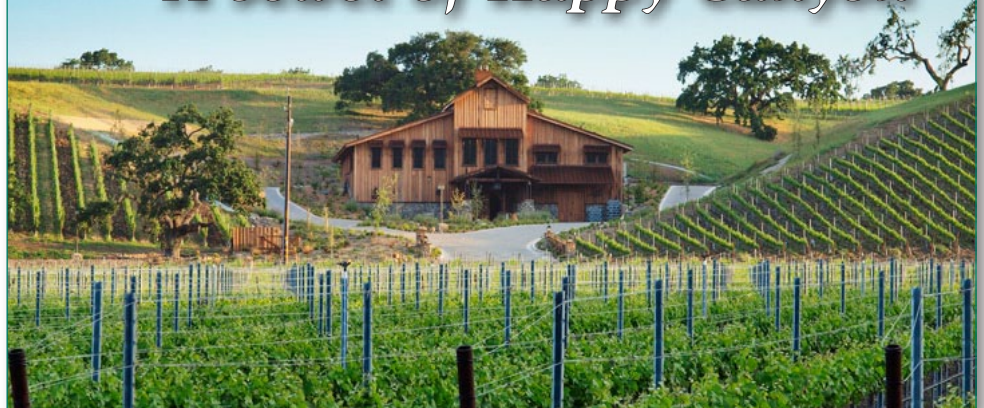
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**Grassini Family Vineyards:
A Jewel of Happy Canyon**



“Instead of joining the rest of the family at church on Sundays, my grandfather, Articondo Grassini... was more religious about keeping a garden,” recalls Larry Grassini, who owns Grassini Family Vineyards and Winery with his wife, Sharon.

“He’d stay home to make that evening’s ravioli from the green bounty of his garden, while enjoying a glass of wine (or two),” Grassini continued. “He also kept chickens. As a nod to Grandpa Articondo, industrious fowl roam our vineyard while sustainably fertilizing the vines.”

Articondo Grassini had come from Pisa, Italy, in the early 1900s with his wife, Afiora Tinucci. Their son (Larry’s father), Leo Peter Grassinii, although he did not make ravioli on Sundays, was equally passionate about keeping a garden to grow much of the family’s food. He shared his love for the soil with his children and grandchildren.

This firmly entrenched tradition has been lovingly passed on. A vegetable garden has been planted at the Grassini Family Vineyards, providing the family with many of the treats they serve with their wine.

And now, these earthy traditions have been entrusted to the third and fourth generations.

“From day one, my wife Sharon, and daughters Katie, Corey, Mandy and Molly, have been there in support of this exciting and enriching undertaking,” Larry Grassini says. “Different blocks of our recently

planted Cabernet Sauvignon clones proudly bear the names of all of our children.”

That vineyard is located northwest of Santa Barbara, within the 40-mile-wide Santa Ynez Valley. At the valley’s eastern edge is the appellation known as Happy Canyon, an area blessed with warm days and cool marine influences with few variations. Nestled on ridge and valley, Grassini Family Vineyards and Winery has found a tranquil refuge where all the conditions necessary for great wine happily converge.

When the Grassinis decided to plant vines on the property that they had





Tasting room.

owned for decades, they called upon Jeff Newton and Larry Finkle, the creators of Coastal Vineyard Care, a full-service vineyard management company that applies sustainable, organic and biodynamic principles to help grape growers and winemakers realize their dreams.

Once planted, the vineyard would be placed in the best, and most experienced, of hands. Ben Merz, the vineyard manager, provides daily direction to the entire team. Merz planned and helped plant the vineyard in 2002.

Vineyard foreman Manuel Cardoza and his dedicated crew do all the heavy lifting that makes it all possible. Cardoza and his team had a hand in planting every vine on the estate, and it is their dedication that has helped create one of the vineyard jewels of the Santa Ynez Valley.

In keeping with the Bordeaux-inspired tradition of the estate, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot varietals complement the Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. In fact, unique Cabernet clones, tended by hand, enhance the exceptional wines produced on the estate.

What makes a great wine? According to Grassini, it is, and always has been, a blend of complexity, balance, finish and finesse — a bit of alchemy and a bit of luck. Truly memorable wines are a marriage of vineyard and winery.

That's why Grassini's vineyard management team works tirelessly and closely with the winemaker to ensure that every vine in the vineyard gets the kind of personal attention that will allow each precious berry to ripen to perfection.

High-density planting, vine crop

reduction, hand-training and careful timing of the pick come together to produce the soft tannins and overall balance of the structure, acid levels, beautiful aromatics, and elegant mouthfeel in the resulting wines.

Each lot from the various vineyard blocks is fermented separately in small batches to ensure proper fermentation temperatures. As in the vineyard, patience in the wine caves pays off. Both red and white wines are allowed to spend leisurely and generous amounts of time in barrel in order to mature and reach the sought-after balance.

"When all goes well, our wines accurately express the unique character of this special estate and those who work here," Grassini says.

In the Cabernet-based wines, this approach results in the inherent power and richness of the Cabernet grape being balanced with the finesse and elegance that define its character. With Sauvignon Blanc, all of this work is intended to capture the typical freshness and liveliness of the variety, and balance it with concentration and depth.

The passion shared by the Grassinis and their extended family make any bottle bearing the Grassini Family Vineyards and Winery label something special.

"It's our hope that all will enjoy the poetry of the wine and its sense of place and tradition with friends and family," Grassini says. "Grandpa Articondo would have been proud."

Winery 4-1-1

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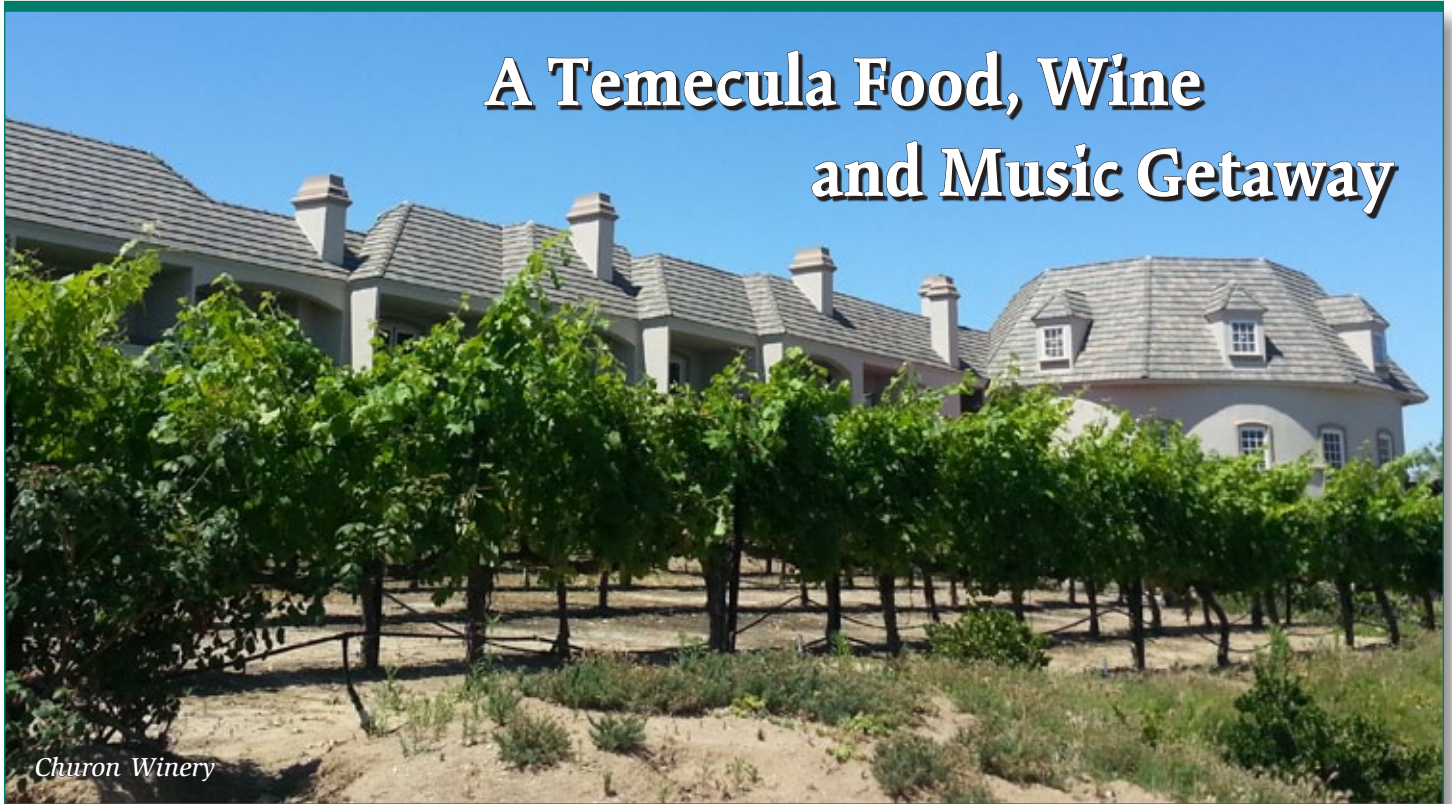
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A Temecula Food, Wine and Music Getaway



Churon Winery

We know that the right food paired with the right wine make beautiful music together. But when you add actual music to that equation, well... now we're talking about a symphony of sights, sounds, aromas and flavors — a tremendous sensory experience.

That's why, each summer, thousands of people flock to the Thornton Winery in Temecula, Calif. — surrounded, roughly, by San Diego, Orange County, the Inland Empire and the Pacific Ocean — for Thornton's Champagne Jazz Series.

Concert-goers may purchase a ticket just for the show, then buy their food and drinks a la carte. Or, they may opt for the Gourmet Supper Package, and nosh on a three-course meal as the evening's performers prepare to take the stage.

Three stars of the smooth jazz genre — Richard Elliot, Peter White and Euge Groove — performed under the banner of "Jazz Attack" on May 30, and will return for an encore concert to conclude the 2015 season on October 18.

On the 30th, the supper package's first course was a Jazz Salad, with mixed greens, dried cranberries, sunflower seeds, Midnight Moon cheese and Brut Rosé vinaigrette. The main course was a perfectly cooked and juicy Lemon Pepper Breast of

Chicken, with rustic mashed potatoes, garden vegetables and rosemary jus. Dessert was Hazelnut Truffle, with hazelnut gelato and a chocolate truffle.

Wine is not included with the supper package, but it is available. Which brings up our only quibble with the experience: Wine can be purchased strictly by the bottle, not by the glass. For some couples, a full bottle may be too much to consume at one

sitting. But that's a minor complaint about an otherwise highly enjoyable convergence of food and music.

Just up the street from Thornton, you'll find the perfect place to relax before a concert, and to unwind and get a good night's sleep afterward. The owners of the Churon Winery and the Inn at Churon Winery like to describe their property as "where a bit of France and rolling vineyard hills of Temecula wine country meet."

That's an apt description. As you wind your way up the grapevine-lined entrance to the Chateau and Winery, the stately 40-foot-high Grand Lobby Rotunda comes into view. The tasting room is located on a lower level, down a winding staircase, and is where guests of the inn enjoy their evening wine hour.

The inn has 19 large vineyard-view rooms, priced from \$179.95 to \$295 per night; three over-sized luxury suites, priced from \$250 to \$395 per night; and two deluxe suites, priced from \$275 to \$450 per night.

Each room features a gas-burning



TOURING TIPS



From the left, Euge Groove, Richard Elliot and Peter White perform at Thornton Winery's Champagne Jazz Series.

fireplace (three of them in the deluxe suites), French doors opening onto a private terrace or balcony, and a king or double queen beds with down blanket bedding. In addition to the evening wine hour, guests awake to a gourmet breakfast.

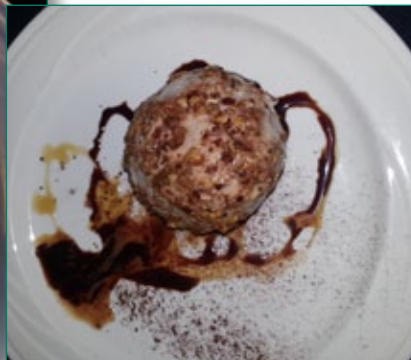
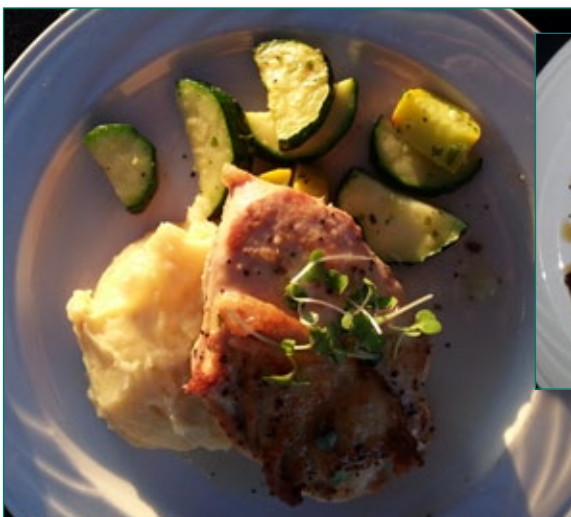
Here's a useful strategy for Thornton concert-goers staying at The Inn at Churin: Arrive around 3 p.m., check in, and settle into your room. When the wine hour begins (the time may vary by day of the week), head downstairs and sample the fine wines made at the estate. The pours are generous, so you may need to pour out some of the wine if you're driving.

Then at around 6:30, hop in the

car and drive the short distance to Thornton. If you've purchased the Gourmet Supper Package, you'll be directed to a parking area that's adjacent to the entrance for table seating. A reserved table — which you'll share with another couple — will be waiting for you, and the food will begin to be brought out in just a few minutes.

And not long thereafter, the music... and the magic... will begin.

For the rest of this year's Champagne Jazz Series schedule, see Wine Buzz in this issue. For The Inn at Churon Winery reservation information, call 951-694-9070.



For dinner: lemon pepper breast of chicken.
For dessert: hazelnut truffle.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

There are many opportunities to enjoy fine art during a visit to California's North Coast wine country. Here are three of them...

1 The Hess Collection. You can view one or two or a handful of pieces of artwork at a number of wineries. But at Hess, located in the Hills of Mount Veeder overlooking the Napa Valley, you can view a substantial portion of a massive art collection that owner Donald Hess began amassing in 1966. Free public access to the collection is provided by the winery, but reservations are strongly suggested.

www.hesscollection.com/art

2 Sonoma Valley Museum. Painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, ceramics, architecture, industrial design, graphic design, printmaking, film, video, textiles and crafts all are displayed at this museum in Sonoma. The exhibits are rotated regularly, so there's always something new to see, and there are works by local, national and international artists.

www.svma.org

3 di Rosa Preserve. Planning to visit both The Hess Collection and the Sonoma Valley Museum? This facility is located about halfway between Sonoma and Napa Valley, and includes one of the largest regional art collections in the country. A gift to the public by Rene di Rosa, a passionate art collector, the Preserve encompasses 217 scenic acres and houses around 2,000 works.

www.diRosaArt.org



Espumoso. Spanish for “sparkling,” used in conjunction with Spain’s Cava wines.

Finish. The flavor(s) that linger in the mouth after a wine is swallowed. A rich, long, complex finish is one aspect of a high-quality wine.

Grafting. The process by which bud wood from a specific grape varietal is united with rootstock. It is often undertaken after a vineyard has been infected by phylloxera.

Hectare. A metric measurement (and thus commonly used in European wine countries) that equates with 2.47 acres.

Isinglass. A protein used as a fining agent in wines.

Jeroboam. A large-format wine bottle that equates to about six standard-sized (750-ml.) bottles of wine. Also known as a Rehoboam.

VINESSE STYLE

GEMS OF THE SEINE

Many Americans have taken cruises on large ships, but many more have not experienced a river cruise — something European vacationers have been enjoying for years.

Scenic Cruises is now offering an 11-day, Paris-to-Paris cruise called “Gems of the Seine” on its newest ship, the Scenic Gem. The ship’s rooms are larger than those found on most European river ships, and feature beds with Egyptian linens, walk-in showers, high-end Duravit sinks, top-of-the-line Dornbracht fixtures and small balcony areas.

There are six dining venues on board, including the upscale L’Amour, which guests may enjoy once on the trip. And unlike on most large cruise lines, there is no up-charge for that fine-dining experience. A meal at L’Amour is included in the cruise price.

In fact, all meals and all beverages — and that goes for beer and wine, in addition to coffee, tea and soft drinks — are included. So are gratuities for the ship’s staff. The price is as close to “all inclusive” as we’ve ever seen on a cruise ship.

Credit cards aren’t even swiped when guests board, and many cruisers disembark back in Paris without a bill.

So, as you can see, “Gems of the Seine” offers many opportunities to enjoy wine while taking in magnificent sights and sites along or near the Seine River: King Richard the Lionheart’s Château Gaillard, the Rouen Cathedral and Museum of Fine Arts, Deauville (playground of the rich and famous), the estate of Manoir d’Appreval (for a unique cocktail event), the beaches of Normandy (where the historic D Day landings took place), the Normandy Cemetery (with its 9,387 graves), and so much more.

For information on 2016 departure dates and pricing, go to: <http://www.scenictours.com/tour/gems-of-the-seine-sei.1-1617/>



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APPELLATION SHOWCASE

WESTERN IOWA

Six wineries in Iowa — a state better known for its corn and soybean production — have united to form the Western Iowa Wine Trail.



Although its often-harsh winters would seem to be a hindrance to quality winemaking, Iowa is home to more than 40 grape varieties developed specifically for cold climes — with names like Marquette, Edelweiss, Frontenac, Brianna, Seyval Blanc and Catawba.

Here's a capsule look at the six estates on the Western Iowa Wine Trail...

■ **Breezy Hills Vineyard** — Step out of the car, and you'll immediately understand how the winery got its name, as you'll be confronted by a gentle breeze or a strong wind. Approximately two dozen wines are crafted annually by Darrell and Roberta Morse, including cold-weather varieties, a sparkling wine and fruit wines.

■ **Danish Countryside Vines and Wines** — This winery is housed in a completely renovated European-style barn. Tours of the winery and vineyard are offered, and guests can enjoy a glass or bottle of wine on a balcony that overlooks the vineyard, or on as spacious patio — weather permitting, of course. White, red, blush and fruit wines are available.

■ **Loess Hills Vineyard & Winery** — Following the Midwestern traditions of hard work and strong values, Loess Hills emphasizes hands-on processing, resulting in exceptional products for its customers. Larry Rohatsch and his wife Sheila, along

with Larry's parents, Ron and Nancy, founded the winery after Larry's homemade wines claimed awards in various state and national wine competitions.

■ **Prairie Crossing Vineyard & Winery** — Within their three-acre vineyard, Andy and Julianna Hrasky grow six varieties, including Catawba, Cayuga White, Concord, Prairie Star, Frontenac and LaCrosse. Each of the 1,300 grapevines are meticulously nurtured by hand to ensure optimal grape quality, the key to producing quality wines. The tasting room offers complimentary samples, and also sells wine by the glass or bottle.

■ **Sugar Clay Winery & Vineyards** — Tucked in a peaceful, rural setting, Sugar Clay boasts a cedar tree-shaded deck that leads to a six-acre vineyard with a beautiful valley view. Owners Frank and Amy Hurst produce handcrafted wines, several of which bear names that have a story behind them — which the Hursts are happy to share.

■ **Vine Street Cellars** — This could be called an "urban winery," as it's located on the east side of the Glenwood town square. The wines are produced on site, and the tasting room and outdoor patio provide a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

To learn more about the wineries of Western Iowa, and for links to these six estates, go to:

<http://westerniowawinetrail.com>



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Q We're going to have a party, and my wife suggests we use our stemless glasses for the wine. I think that would be tacky. What do you think?

A Stemless glasses have several advantages, not the least of which is that they don't break as easily as glasses with stems — which might be a consideration at a party with lots of people bumping elbows. Also, keep in mind that Italian families have been drinking wine from tumblers for generations. So if your party includes Italian food, that would give you a good “excuse” to keep the stemware in the cupboard and use those stemless glasses as part of your party's “theme.”

The many “green” initiatives embraced by Alexander Valley Vineyards in Sonoma County, Calif., have been in use for more than three decades. Early on, the Wetzel family composted winery waste, practiced irrigation management and planted cover crops in the vineyards to minimize the use of pesticides and control erosion. The motto of founders Hank and Linda Wetzel was: “Sustainability is about using less and having more,” and from the beginning they instilled those values in their family. More recently, they installed solar panels on the winery and increased their naturally cooled caves to 25,000 square feet. Harry Wetzel has followed his father's lead on sustainability and says that, “Quite simply, it is the right thing to do. Minimizing our impact on the environment is not only good for us, but it's healthy for everything around us as well.”

“Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the most natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection, and it offers a greater range for enjoyment and appreciation than, possibly, any other purely sensory thing.”



— American author Ernest Hemingway

187.5

Number of milliliters of wine contained in those “single-serve” bottles distributed in coach class on most airlines. This represents one-fourth the amount of wine in a standard 750-ml. bottle. Names for those small bottles include Picolo, Split and Pony.

Thornton Winery's 2015 Summer Concert Series

If this issue's Wine Touring Tips feature got you in the mood for some fine dining and good music, here's a look at the rest of Thornton Winery's 2015 Summer Concert Series schedule (all shows begin at 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted):

- **Saturday, July 11** — Dave Koz and Friends (Rick Braun and Kenny Lattimore).
- **Sunday, July 12** — Dave Koz and Friends (Rick Braun and Kenny Lattimore), 6 p.m.
- **Saturday, July 25** — Jefferey Osborne and Gerald Albright.
- **Saturday, August 1** — Michael McDonald.
- **Saturday, August 8** — Melissa Etheridge.
- **Sunday, August 9** — Chris Isaak, 6 p.m.
- **Saturday, August 15** — Al Jarreau and Keiko Matsui.
- **Saturday, August 22** — Larry Graham and Macy Gray.
- **Saturday, August 29** — Kenny G and Ariana Savalas.
- **Saturday, September 5** — Boney James.
- **Sunday, September 13** — Chris Botti.
- **Sunday, September 20** — George Benson, 4 p.m.
- **Saturday, September 26** — Boz Scaggs.
- **Saturday, October 3** — Tower of Power and Average White Band.
- **Saturday, October 10** — Jesse Cook.
- **Sunday, October 18** — Jazz Attack (Richard Elliot, Peter White and Euge Groove), 4 p.m.

To order tickets, call 951-699-3021, or visit www.thorntonwine.com

FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



Pretzels with wine? We enjoy occasional visits to Auntie Anne's or Wetzel's Pretzels when visiting a mall or killing time in an airport, but never had we thought about eating this warm, chewy treat with a glass of wine.

Never, that is, until we visited Switzerland and encountered the Brezelkonig kiosk at the main train station in Lucerne. We saw lots of people lined up to get their midday snack, and then we spotted a number of other people sitting nearby with pretzels and small bottles of wine — the latter purchased at a nearby convenience store.

We didn't really know what to think of this seemingly unusual pairing. So, we decided to give it a try.

We ordered a plain pretzel and a sesam (that's how sesame was spelled on the menu), and then headed over to the convenience store. To our surprise, there were several types of wine available, all in those small, double-serving (375-ml.) bottles. Only one problem: They were Swiss wines... something we knew next to nothing about.

Fortunately, the cashier spoke English. We asked her for some help, and told we'd like to try two different wines. She recommended whites, and we were on our way.

The wines were light-bodied and lacking much fruit flavor. But they were well chilled, and went just fine with the salty pretzels.

But what about pretzels with other, more assertive flavors — the kind you might find at your local mall, airport, or other pretzel purveyor? As always, it's best to match the wine with the dominant flavor of the food. Here are a few suggestions:

- With a pepperoni pretzel — Zinfandel or Petite Sirah.
- With a roasted garlic and Parmesan pretzel — Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or Syrah.
- With a sour cream and onion pretzel — Chardonnay.

Who knew that pretzels could be such versatile wine pairing partners? The Swiss — that's who!

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

Summer — wines for barbecues, picnics or just for sipping. Fall — wines for hearty, harvest-time dishes. You get the idea. All wines are selected by our Tasting Panel to pair beautifully with the foods you love.

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- Detailed Tasting Notes for each featured wine

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PRICE:

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GRILLED CHICKEN FLATBREAD

This is a great dish for casual summertime noshing, and pairs well with everything from Chardonnay to Pinot Noir, and from lighter-bodied (red) Zinfandel to rosé-style wines. This recipe yields 8 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. frozen pizza dough, thawed
- 1 tub (8-oz.) cream cheese
- 2 Tbsp. milk
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 boneless chicken breast (6-oz.), grilled and sliced into small pieces
- 1/2 cup roasted red pepper strips
- 1 cup sliced canned artichoke hearts, drained
- 1 cup shredded Mozzarella cheese
- 2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp. sliced fresh basil

Preparation

1. Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. On a lightly floured baking sheet, pat pizza dough into a 16-inch by 12-inch rectangle.
3. Bake for 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, mix cream cheese, milk and garlic powder until well blended.
5. Spread mixture onto pizza crust.
6. Top with chicken pieces, pepper strips, artichoke pieces, Mozzarella cheese and Parmesan cheese.
7. Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until Mozzarella is melted and the edges of the crust are golden brown.
8. Top with basil and serve.

GRILLED SALMON

Salmon with Zinfandel? Yes — when the dish comes with a little “kick,” and when the cooking method is grilling. This dish also pairs nicely with Pinot Noir, and this recipe yields 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup barbecue sauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili garlic sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 4 salmon fillets (appx. 6-oz. each)
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, minced

Preparation

1. In a small bowl, combine the first six ingredients. Set aside 1/4 cup.
2. Moisten a paper towel with cooking oil. Using long-handled tongs, lightly coat the grill rack.
3. Grill salmon, covered, over hot heat for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork, basting occasionally with barbecue sauce mixture.
3. Top with reserved sauce, and sprinkle with cilantro.

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