

Wineries

Most reviews by James Knight. Note: Those listings marked 'WC' denote wineries with caves. These wineries are usually only open to the public by appointment. Wineries in these listings appear on a rotating basis.

SONOMA COUNTY

Annapolis Winery

Decades before the cool Sonoma Coast became hot property, the Scalabrini family quietly planted their vineyards high above the coastal fog. Small, family-run, and a popular wedding spot; the Gewürz sells out fast. 26055 Soda Springs Road, **Annapolis**. Open daily. 707.886.5460.

Christopher Creek The tasting room is a small, wood-paneled anteroom stocked with bins of wine. There are no fountains, Italian tiles or anything not having to do directly with the business of sampling wines made on the premises. Chard and Cab shine. 641 Limerick Lane, **Healdsburg**. Open daily, 11am–5pm. 707.433.2001.

Graton Ridge Cellars

Formerly an apple shed beloved by regular customers who drove up to get juice and apples, this tasting room is clean and contemporary, with a bit of wine country art on the walls, and an apple dessert wine. The apples are not gone after all. 3561 Gravenstein Hwy. N., **Sebastopol**. Daily, 10am–4:30pm. \$10. 707.823.3040.

Inman Family Wines

Inman Family Wines Unique, single-vineyard Russian River Pinot Noir is a good reason to visit Inman Family Wine's new winery and tasting room; you'll crush on the "Endless Crush" sparkling Brut, too! 3900 Piner Road, **Santa Rosa**. Open 11am–4pm, Thursday through Monday. 707.293.9576.

Locals Tasting Room

Locals is a high-concept tasting room offering over 60 wines from nine wineries in varietal flights. Corner of Geyserville Avenue and Highway 128, **Geyserville**. Open daily, 11am–6pm. 707.857.4900.

Meeker Vineyard You might expect Meeker to be

more slicked-out, what with its big-time Hollywood origins (co-owner Charlie Meeker is a former movie executive). But that's clearly not the case. 21035 Geyserville Ave., **Geyserville**. Open Monday–Saturday, 10:30am–6pm; Sunday, noon–5pm. 707.431.2148.

Occidental Road Cellars

High-end clients like Schramsberg and Radio-Coteau buy most of the Prathers' grapes; just 5 percent are made into their own wine, and at a comparative "grower's discount." Chard, Pinot, and cool-climate Syrah at its very best. 2064 Gravenstein Hwy. N., Building 7, **Sebastopol**. By appointment, Saturday 1–4pm. 707.874.9470.

Portalupi Wine Husband-and-wife team went the distance, selecting Barbera cuttings from the Italian alps: their Barbera was named best in the world. You'll also find Vermentino, Pinot, and rustic-chic two-liter milk jugs of "vino di tavola" in comfortable downtown lounge; wine education classes for groups. 107 North St., **Healdsburg**. Open daily, 10:30am–7pm. Tasting fee, \$5–\$12. 707.395.0960.

Stephen & Walker The sign says, um, "cult wines," but take another look: Local winemakers who have crawled up from the very trenches of the business are offering Howell Mountain Cab, a Pinot Noir triptych, Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, and Muscat Canelli here. 243 Healdsburg Ave., **Healdsburg**. Daily, 11am–7pm. Tasting fee, \$10. 707.431.8749.

NAPA COUNTY

Benessere Vineyards

Super Tuscan with a side of Zin, on the site of the original Charles Shaw, for you history buffs. Super Sangiovese, puckery Pinot Grigio, and pretty, perfumed Aglianico, what the Romans enjoyed as

the legendary "falernum." 1010 Big Tree Road, **St. Helena**. Daily, 10am–5pm. Tasting fee, \$20. 707.963.5853.

Castello di Amorosa

Not only an "authentic Medieval Italian castle," but authentically far more defensible than any other winery in Napa from legions of footmen in chain mail. In wine, there's something for every taste, but don't skip the tour of great halls, courtyards, cellars, and—naturally—an authentic dungeon. 4045 N. St. Helena Hwy., **Calistoga**. 9:30am–5pm. Tasting fees, \$10–\$15; tours, \$25–\$30. Napa Neighbor discounts. 707.967.6272.

Hess Collection

Winery An intellectual outpost of art and wine housed in the century-old Christian Brother's winery. Cab is the signature varietal. 4411 Redwood Road, **Napa**. Open daily, 10am–4pm. 707.255.1144.

Inglénook Vineyard

What's new at Inglénook? Very little. The iconic stone building, robed in green vines, appears exactly as it did in 1890. But that's news, and all thanks to owner Francis Ford Coppola. Still living up to Gustave Niebaum's dream of fine wine to rival France, the once-beloved Inglénook is putting out the goods once again. 1991 St. Helena Hwy., **Rutherford**. Daily, 10am–5pm. Reservations for tour and tasting (\$50) recommended; none required for bistro and exhibits. 707.968.1161.

Smith-Madrone Riesling is Smith-Madrone's main fame claim. Its Riesling has steadily gained fame while Napa Valley Riesling in general has become a rare antique. 4022 Spring Mountain Road, **St. Helena**. By appointment. 707.963.2283.

Trefethen Winery

Some critics claim Trefethen's heyday was in the '60s, but the winery proves them wrong with dependable, delicious wines. Trefethen is one of the oldest wineries in Napa. 1160 Oak Knoll Ave., **Napa**. Open daily, 11:30am–4:30pm. 707.255.7700.

Swirl

Against the Grain

A taste of Tokaj at Tricycle Wine Partners

BY JAMES KNIGHT

There's more to terroir than the dirt that grapevines grow in, even if that dirt is a particularly dramatic dirt, like the dirt in the picture on Arpad Molnar's cell phone.

Molnar points to a foot-wide fissure that the South Napa Earthquake opened up in his family's Poseidon Vineyard, which is situated directly above the quake's epicenter. That's crazy dirt, but in the Carneros, it's the cool breeze from nearby San Pablo Bay that keeps the Poseidon Vineyard 2013 Estate Chardonnay (\$26) bright with acidity. And where do those intriguing, spiced orange tea notes come from?

Molnar hands me a chunk of obsidian—weathered but sparkling blackly—from the family's Lake County vineyard. Volcanic soils and high elevation intensify the juicy cassis flavors of the Obsidian Ridge 2010 "The Slope" Cabernet Sauvignon (\$45), and contribute to the cool aromas of mint, fragrant eucalyptus and chewy, blueberry and blackberry fruit of the Obsidian Ridge 2011 Lake County Syrah (\$30). But that's not the last word in terroir at Tricycle Wine Partners.

On the tasting room's tree-shaded deck, Peter Molnar plunks a slab of light-colored rock on a table. It's andesitic tuff, formed millions of years ago in what is now Hungary. Specifically, it underlies the forests of Tokaj, the source of all oak barrels that Poseidon and Obsidian Ridge wines are aged in.

Brothers Arpad and Peter Molnar, whose father escaped Hungary after the failed revolution of 1956, returned to their ancestral land in the early 1990s. "It was a really exciting time," says Arpad, with a gleam in his eye. They soon developed a business venture with a co-op cooperative, one of the few employee-owned businesses that was not totally privatized. With capital from the Molnars, Kádár Hungary grew and is now partnered with French barrel biggie Taransaud.

Peter is unfazed when asked if Hungarian oak, which is less expensive than French oak, might be seen as second-best by consumers. After all, they've got 150 winery clients in the United States, and French and Hungarian oak barrels are made from the same species of tree, *Quercus robur* and *Quercus petraea*. Moreover, the slow-growing Tokaj forests—sustainably managed since a 1769 decree by the Holy Roman Empress—produce a tight-grained, spicy oak that was used centuries ago in Bordeaux, and is prized for its mid-palate characteristics.

"Let's put it this way," Arpad interjects. "Winemakers are more adventurous than most consumers." Indeed, there's that orange spice again, cropping up in the Poseidon Vineyard 2013 Carneros Pinot Noir (\$32). Light and lively, it's a nice enough Pinot—and one with a whole world of terroir.

Tricycle Wine Partners, 23568 Arnold Drive, Sonoma. In Cornerstone Sonoma. Open daily, 11am–5pm (weekends to 6pm). Tasting fee, \$10. 707.255.4929.

