

INFO TO GO

TASTING ROOM Poseidon Vineyard & Obsidian Ridge Winery

Putting down roots in hub of gardens and sculptures

By Carey Sweet

On a recent balmy day at Poseidon Vineyard & Obsidian Ridge Winery in Sonoma, people lounged on cushy chaises on the wood deck in front of the tasting room. Others played bocce ball in the shade of olive trees, off an expansive courtyard dotted with gardens and sculptures where more visitors clambered up for photos in a giant blue Adirondack chair.

It was a quintessential Wine Country afternoon, with a few small kids running around, their parents lazily watching as they sipped Chardonnay, and several dogs basking in the sun.



Arpad Molnar

Poseidon Vineyard & Obsidian Ridge Winery is part of Cornerstone Sonoma.

The vibe: It's a great trick use of space, since the property is actually Cornerstone Sonoma, the eclectic 9-acre center on the Highway 121 Carneros winery corridor that mixes landscape architect installations, art and home design shops, a restaurant, and two other wine tasting rooms. The Poseidon tasting room itself is quite small, trimmed simply with a wooden bar supported by barrels, accents of corrugated metal and dark wood, and lots of wine set on polished wood shelves.

The experience: Just opened in August 2013, this is the first tasting room for the winery. But the wine isn't new — the Poseidon Vineyard was planted in 1973 near the Napa County Airport, and still supplies the signature Chardonnay and Pinot Noir today.

The Poseidon brand was front-and-center in the news this August, however, when the 6.0-magnitude Napa earthquake struck, its epicenter at the Napa Valley Marina right next to its vineyards. Remarkably, there was no damage to the property, though during my late October visit to the tasting room, the quake was still a topic among the guests. It was clear the host had joyfully told this ironic story plenty of times since summer. The vineyard was named after the Greek god of the sea, also known as "the earth-shaker" because, according to legend, the deity got a kick out of causing quakes.

The team: After emigrating from Hungary in 1956, Nicholas and Catherine Molnar moved into grape growing in the early '70s, putting their sons to work in the fields. By 1993, the entrepreneurial family was also importing Hungarian barrels to Napa with their Kadar Hungary co-ownership.

In 1999, the family planted the Obsidian Ridge vineyard, focusing on Cabernet Sauvignon. Four years later, sons Arpad and Peter took over operations, added their longtime enologist Michael Terrien as a principal, and founded Tricycle Wine Partners as the parent company. By 2011, the group was ready to move from custom crush and build their own winery.

The wines: The \$10 tasting fee is a reasonable investment for four wines, poured generously in the alfresco wine bar setting. While Cornerstone is a tourist destination, it's also a neighborhood hub south of the Highways 116 and 121 crossroads. The energy is enjoyable; on my weekend visit, it seemed there were a good number of locals, stopping by after grocery shopping at the Fruit Basket across the street, and on their way to Angelo's Wine Country Deli next door.

We choose our quartet from a list of six wines, including Poseidon Estate Chardonnay 2013 (\$26), the Bench Chardonnay 2012 (\$34) and Estate Pinot Noir 2013 (\$32), plus Obsidian Ridge Estate Syrah 2011 (\$30), Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 (\$30) and the Slope Cabernet Sauvignon 2010 (\$45).

The extras: Big wineries may have their private gardens with a few sculptures, but Cornerstone boasts a SculptureWalk of 60 large-scale works that you can wander around, bringing your kids or your leashed dog for a stroll.

If you go: Open daily 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. 23568 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, (707) 555-4929, www.tricyclewine.com.

Nearby: Cline Cellars, 24737 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, (707) 940-4000, www.clinecellars.com. Jacuzzi Family Vineyards, 24724 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, (707) 931-7576, www.jacuzziwines.com. Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards, 23555 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, (707) 996-7256, www.gloriaferrer.com.

Rating: ★★



Tricycle Wine Partners

Wines are offered inside the tasting room and on the deck.

QUOTABLE TRAVELER

By Larry Habegger

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— Derella Murphy, Irish author of travel books, including "Full Tilt" (1965)

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What's not: Be careful with the 911 feature if you're testing the app. Once it's armed, all it takes is a

touch of the screen.

When I tried to close out of the app, the "calling 911" alarm sounded. Luckily you have five seconds to cancel if it's not a real emergency.

Worth it: I put this app in the most-used area of my phone. Even if you use it only once, it could be a lifesaver.

— Jen Leo, Los Angeles Times



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