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FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO *read*, LOVE TO *eat*, AND LOVE TO *travel*

Casual Chic HEALDSBURG

by LAURA SUTHERLAND



California

WHERE ON EARTH

HEALDSBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND VISITORS BUREAU

PHOTO THIS SPREAD
Healdsburg lies at the heart
of Sonoma wine country.



✱
*...It's wine country
living at its best...*



«WAS IT THE SANGIOVESE, THE SAUVIGNON

Blanc, or the hot sun that made my legs feel a little wobbly? Thank goodness my bicycle was riding straight and true — I'd been careful to swirl and sip rather than slurp and swill — but the ride back somehow seemed longer...with more uphill climbs than downhill coasts.

There were few cars and a seemingly endless supply of quiet country lanes flecked with wineries just waiting for a visit. We pedaled along, pausing every now and then to admire a particularly beautiful hillside lined with grapevines, each row accented with a rose bush bursting with blooms. Every few miles we turned our bikes into a quaint little winery to taste small-batch Italian varietals or a family-run establishment that made Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Zinfandel or Cabernet Sauvignon — all wines this part of Sonoma County is famous for.

The upscale small town of Healdsburg sits right at the centre of this winemaking action with three blockbuster grape-growing valleys — the Dry Creek Valley, Russian River Valley, and Alexander Valley — fanning out from downtown. Years ago Healdsburg was jokingly referred to as the buckle

on the prune belt because of its vast orchards of prunes, but over the last few decades this once sleepy little agricultural town has been taken seriously for its world-class wines and increasingly sophisticated culinary scene.

Part of this area's appeal is that it is far quieter and less expensive than the Napa Valley, its bustling next door neighbour. You can stay in any number of places in tiny downtown Healdsburg — from modest budget lodgings and historic B&Bs to intimate luxury hotels. Restaurants, shops, and cafés are all within a few blocks of the leafy town square, and you can easily spend a full day visiting the 30 downtown tasting rooms without clocking more than a few hundred steps on your Fitbit. But it's just as much fun — if not more — to venture out by bicycle or vehicle through the three valleys to explore the wineries and sample the wine right where it's made.

Take DaVero Winery — a biodynamic organic farm and winery in Dry Creek Valley — where, of course, you can taste their wines (as well as their home grown olive oil) — but you can also wander around the farm and vineyards and scratch behind the ears of Patsy the resident pig while heirloom



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD FROM
LEFT Downtown Healdsburg;
Vineyard rows; Local cheese.

chickens search for bugs nearby. On a hot day, sample Davero's old world varietals, such as Vermentino, Carignano, and Dolcetto, in the shade of the Willow Room, a spacious dome made entirely of interlaced willow branches that is right out of a children's story book.

Like many wineries in this area, Davero hosts al fresco farm-to-table dinners in the late spring, summer and fall, and if your trip lines up with one, reserve it immediately as they sell out quickly. After strolling around the farm and vineyards sipping a glass of wine, guests sit at long farm tables and linger over multiple courses. It's wine country living at its best — lazily warm but not hot; the sun setting over rolling hills and fields of fruit-heavy vines; tables laden with dishes crafted from minutes-fresh local produce; and glasses overflowing with wine made from grapes harvested just a few feet from your table. Quivira Vineyards and Winery and Seghesio Family Vineyards have similar dinners — www.WineRoads.com is a good resource to see what might coincide with your visit.

Healdsburg restaurants tend to specialize in farm-to-fork too, and since this part of the world can grow just about »



SERVES 4

Poached Pears in White Wine and Ginger Sauce

Sugar 1 cup, plus 1 Tbs

Water ½ cup

Dry White Wine 1 cup

Lemon Zest yellow part only, coarsely chopped, 1 tsp

Fresh Ginger 2 Tbs, julienned

Bosc Pears¹ 4, peeled but stem on

Grand Marnier or Cointreau 2 Tbs

Cinnamon ½ tsp

¹ Or any firm pear.

1 IN a saucepan, combine 1 cup of the sugar with the water, white wine, lemon zest and ginger. Bring the mixture to a boil for about 5 minutes, stirring to make sure the sugar dissolves.

2 ADD the pears and poach until tender, 15–20 minutes. Rotate the pears if necessary to ensure even cooking.

3 REMOVE the pears from the cooking liquid and set aside. Bring the liquid to a boil and reduce by half. Remove the ginger and reserve. Discard the lemon zest.

4 ADD the Grand Marnier or Cointreau to the liquid and blend.

5 SLICE a small piece off the bottom of each pear and stand them up on individual serving plates. Drizzle the sauce over the pears and sprinkle with the reserved ginger and sugar, and a pinch of cinnamon.

USA



PHOTOS FROM LEFT
J Vineyards entrance;
Wine and cheese pairing
at J Vineyards.



SERVES 4

Wine and Rosemary Marinated Skirt Steak

Skirt Steak 2 ½ lb

Red Wine 1 cup

Worcestershire Sauce
2 Tbs

Dijon Mustard 3 Tbs

Dried Thyme 2 Tbs

Rosemary 5 large sprigs,
leaves stripped off
and diced

White Onion 1, diced

Garlic 8 cloves, diced

Balsamic Vinegar ¼ cup

Olive Oil ¾ cup

Salt 1 tsp

Freshly Ground Black
Pepper 2 tsp

- 1 PUT** the steak in a shallow dish or plastic bag. Whisk together all other ingredients and pour over the steak. Marinate for 6–8 hours in the refrigerator.
- 2 TAKE** the meat out of the refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking to let it come to room temperature. Grill over hot coals or in a grill pan until done to your liking. Allow to rest covered in foil for 15 minutes. Slice against the grain to serve.

«anything, menus are varied and lavish. Award-winning Charlie Palmer's Dry Creek Kitchen has been on food connoisseurs' radars for a number of years, but Valette Healdsburg, a new restaurant in town started by one of Dry Creek's former chefs, is getting plenty of well-deserved buzz. Our favourite dish was the American Kobe New York steak — its outside seared to lock in juice, the meat enhanced with a foie gras and pink peppercorn butter that melted over the top and down the sides, edging up to the artichoke *barigoule* and local morel mushrooms that shared the plate.


Mateo Granados of Mateo's Cocina Latina is another chef who cut his teeth at Dry Creek Kitchen. He now runs his own restaurant, where he creates dishes that feature a modern twist on Yucatan cuisine, using local ingredients. We loved his spin on a Mexi-ice cream cone — a crispy corn tortilla cone piled high with an unusual olive oil guacamole dappled with chunks of persimmon and red onion. Since we'd made liberal use of Mateo's signature habanero sauce that graces every table — and the afternoon was spicy hot — we cooled off with a fresh lemongrass margarita; Mateo has over 100 tequilas and mezcals available in the bar.

Next we stopped in at Bravas Bar de Tapas to sip local and Spanish wines and sherries. The menu includes Spanish classics like patatas bravas and pan tomate and new spins on tapas, like duck meatball bocadillos with tomato sofrito and green olive purée. The food and drinks were outstanding, but the expansive outdoor bar and patio made us want to return again and again to relax below a web of glowing market lights under the night sky.

Just a few miles north of downtown Healdsburg is Simi Winery, still in the same spot where the Simi brothers started making wine in 1870. The diverse soils in their Alexander Valley vineyards are perfect for red Bordeaux varietals, while their vineyards in the cooler, foggier Russian River Valley yield deliciously creamy Chardonnay. After tasting, you can buy a bottle of your favourite wine in the well stocked visitors' centre, pick up some chef-made gourmet goodies, and picnic in the redwood-shaded

gardens, considered some of the most beautiful in Healdsburg.

But we didn't picnic since we had reserved a spot at J Vineyards and Winery's Bubble Lounge to sample rare library wines and small-production sparkling wines that had been carefully paired with small plates — all explained by a wine educator. I tasted, listened and learned, but I mostly wanted to distract the person sitting next to me and backhand his cheese — a wedge of Bellweather Farm's black peppercorn sheep's milk cheese. It had been paired with a 100 percent Pinot Meunier, usually a varietal you find blended with chardonnay and pinot noir grapes in sparkling wines and champagnes. Good manners got the best of me and I kept my hands to myself.

The flavours of cheese and wine were so elegantly matched, I bought a bottle of the Pinot Meunier on the spot so I could recreate the thrill... but I never could find the cheese that brought out the best and the brightest in the wine and vice versa. I guess I'll have to drink the wine by itself and comfort myself with the knowledge that some moments are best left to memory. 

Visit

Bravas Bar de Tapas
www.starkrestaurants.com/bravas.html

J Vineyards & Winery
www.jwine.com

Mateo's Cocina Latina
www.mateoscocinalatina.com

Quivira Vineyards
www.quivirawine.com

Davero Farms and Winery
www.davero.com

Seghesio Family Vineyards
www.seghesio.com

Simi Winery
www.simiwinery.com

Valette Healdsburg
www.valettehealdsburg.com

Dry Creek Kitchen
www.drycreekkitchen.com

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Click



SUSAN BARDI

USA

Cook

SERVES 4

Poached Shrimp, Melon and Baby Greens

THE POACHED SHRIMP and dressing for this elegant first course can be prepared up to one day ahead; refrigerate separately.

Fennel Bulbs 2 small, thinly sliced

Leek 1 small, white and tender green part only, thinly sliced

Garlic 3 cloves

Fennel Seeds 1 tsp

Coriander Seeds 1 tsp

Black Peppercorns 1 tsp

Orange finely grated zest and juice of 1 medium

Dry White Wine 1 cup

Water 3 cups

Kosher Salt 2 tsp

Large Shrimp 1 lb, shelled and deveined

Extra Virgin Olive Oil 3 Tbs

White Balsamic or White Wine Vinegar 1 Tbs

Smoked Hot Paprika ½ tsp

Diced Cantaloupe 1 ½ cups

Diced Honeydew 1 ½ cups

Mixed Baby Greens 4 cups

Fresh Tarragon Chopped 1 Tbs

- 1** **IN** a large saucepan, combine half of the fennel with the leek, garlic, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, black peppercorns, orange zest, orange juice, white wine, water and 2 tsp of kosher salt and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat for 20 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes.
- 2** **ADD** the shrimp to the saucepan and cook over low heat until barely pink. Remove from the heat and let the shrimp marinate and continue to cook in the warm liquid for 15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the shrimp and refrigerate until cool. Strain the poaching liquid, reserving 1 cup.
- 3** **IN** a small saucepan, boil the reserved poaching liquid over high heat until reduced to 2 Tbs (about 15 minutes); transfer to a large bowl and whisk in the oil and vinegar. Season to taste with salt and smoked paprika. Add the cantaloupe, honeydew, salad greens, tarragon, shrimp and the remaining sliced raw fennel. Toss gently and serve.