

QUENCH

NAPA VALLEY

USA



Napa

WHERE ON EARTH

DAVID H. COLLIER

Seeking Wine Wisdom *in the* Napa Valley

by LAURA SUTHERLAND



PHOTO THIS SPREAD
Summer vineyards;
Wine pouring.

IT SEEMED SACRILEGIOUS — A PERFECTLY GOOD GLASS OF cabernet sauvignon filled to the brim with chunks of green pepper. But I accepted it gracefully, took a long sniff and passed it along. More glasses made the rounds containing things like five spice powder, mint, black olives, and cassia until we'd inhaled the aromas of eight different items steeping in cabernet. It was a sensory warm-up to help us understand the scent characteristics of this popular grape, the most commonly grown in the Napa Valley and the most widely planted wine grape in the world.

We'd already learned about colour, acidity, tannins and alcohol levels as a way to identify wine varietals, ages, and whether a wine was new or old world. Next — blind tasting five different cabs. Our teacher/sommelier stood at the white board waiting for us call to out our impressions as we sampled our first wine: "Smoke! Mocha! Black cherry! New world! Young!" And then onto the second cab: "Earthy! Tobacco! Pine! Leather!" »

«Since the Napa Valley is all about wine and food, we had decided to sharpen our skills and focus our visit on educating our palates. This particular class — *Nailed It! Cabernet Sauvignon* — was put on by CIA Copia in downtown Napa, a new cooking and wine education facility intended for consumers rather than professional chefs. A few miles up the Napa Valley in St Helena is its sister — the Culinary Academy of America CIA Greystone — intended for professional chefs in a building that looks like a grand manor out of the Scottish Highlands and has a fabulous kitchen shop and an inventive restaurant featuring student chefs.

After sampling and guessing we found out the pertinent facts about each wine — the winemaker, location, vintage and price. At the end of the class we voted on our favourite and the hands-down winner was a 2013 cab from Napa's Honig Winery.

Ready to pair our new knowledge with food, my companion and I headed a few doors down to The Restaurant at CIA Copia to sample dishes like crispy tender chickpea pancakes studded with Copia olives, and spicy mussels with Calabrian chiles and grilled bread. Since we could Uber or Lyft the short distance back to our hotel, the Silverado Resort and Spa, we let our server suggest wine pairings with every course.

There are plenty of places to stay in the Napa Valley, but the Silverado's proximity to the town of Napa (the largest town in the valley) and lively activities like golf, tennis, swimming, a kids program and a spa made it an easy choice. The Silverado sits in a quiet neighbourhood just off of the Silverado Trail, one of the two roads that traverse the length of the narrow, thirty-by-five-mile valley. It tends to be the quieter of the two roads and doesn't have the traffic jams that can clog the other thoroughfare, Highway 129.

Tasting another stellar Napa Valley liquid was next on our agenda, and our education theme took us to Round Pond Estate, where we started the morning with a two-hour olive oil tasting class. As we parked the car, a sign reading "Honig" (the winner of our cabernet experience) pointed down the driveway so we decided to add it to our itinerary. But first there was olive oil to explore.

We learned about keeping the 100-year-old Spanish and the 28 different types of Italian olive trees happy and productive before heading into the processing area to see where the pressing, curing and brining magic happens. Once in the tasting room, we sampled olive oils from different types of trees and experienced the delicious ways that Round Pond's extra virgin olive»



BOB MCCLLENAHAN COURTESY VISIT NAPA VALLEY



ROUND POND ESTATE

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Napa Valley sign; Olives at Round Pond Estate; Terrace at Round Pond Estate; Food pairing with sparkling wine; Springtime Napa cuisine.



JOSIAH ROE



BOB MCCLLENAHAN

Cook
it

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LAURA SUTHERLAND

SERVES 4

Short Ribs Braised in Red Wine

Beef Short Ribs

4 x 2" pieces, cut across the bone

Unsalted Butter 1 Tbs

Vegetable Oil 2 Tbs

Onion 1 medium, finely chopped

Celery 1 large rib, finely chopped

Garlic 3-4 cloves, minced

Carrot 1 large, finely chopped

Tomato Paste 2 Tbs

Flour 2 Tbs

Chicken or Beef Stock 2 cups

Dry Full-Bodied Red Wine 1 x 750 ml bottle

Salt and Pepper to taste

Cooked Polenta to serve it over

- 1 IN** a large cast iron or enameled pan, melt the butter, add the garlic, onion, celery and carrots and cover and cook 5 minutes, until slightly softened. Uncover and cook another 3-5 minutes until slightly browned. Stir in the tomato paste, cook for one minute, add the flour and cook one more minute, stirring constantly. Add the stock and red wine and bring to a simmer.
- 2 MEANWHILE**, in a large skillet, heat the oil until shimmering. Season the short ribs with salt and plenty of pepper, add them to the hot pan and cook over moderately high heat until they are well browned, about 10-15 minutes.
- 3 TRANSFER** the short ribs to the cast iron pan and cook partially covered over moderately low heat until very tender, approximately two hours.
- 4 TRANSFER** the short ribs to a plate. Strain the sauce and skim off some of the fat. Return the sauce to the pan and reduce for ten minutes until it's about two cups. Return the meat to the sauce and simmer over low until the meat is completely heated. Reseason to taste with salt and pepper.
- 5 SERVE** atop polenta.



ROUND POND ESTATE





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*...Like many of the
wineries we visited,
Round Pond is
biodynamic...*

«oils, vinegars and syrups can be used in food. Luckily we'd had a very light breakfast, because we sampled nine different artistic small bites, designed by the chef that creates Round Pond Winery's food and wine pairings that were next on our itinerary.

Across the road at the winery tasting room, we relaxed outside on a chic patio overlooking rolling hills of vineyards and the mountains that separate Napa from the Sonoma Valley and the Pacific Ocean. While our wine educator talked about the wines we tasted, we were served small bites paired with wine, like a mini steak sandwich and salmon rillettes with Meyer lemon olive oil. Like many of the wineries we visited, Round Pond is biodynamic and has a lavish six-acre organic garden on its grounds where chef Jamie Prouten takes inspiration for his menus.

After calling and letting Honig know we wanted to visit, we headed down the driveway. Some wineries in Napa let you drop in unannounced for a tasting but others state "by reservation only" on their websites or road signs as a way for them to plan for visitors. It's casual and expected and you shouldn't be intimidated by it.

The weather was sunny so we sat outside and revisited the winning 2013 cab and a few other Honig wines. We just missed meeting the winery's golden retriever, who has been trained to sniff out a nearly invisible insect that feeds on tender young grapevines. When the highly trained working dog (and beloved pet) detects the insect, the infected plants are removed before the infestation can spread. It's one of many clever methods used by Napa vintners to eliminate pesticides.

A sophisticated wine collector friend insisted we take 'Aromatherapy with a Corkscrew' at St Supery Winery to further improve our scent identification skills. Our wine educator (who had been an actor in NYC and was now a very amusing sommelier) gestured for us to sit as he hugged a wooden box filled with 12 little blue glass jars as if to guard them from our prying eyes. After he had passed jars around for us to sniff, we guessed what they contained and sipped the first glass of wine to try to »



OLAF BECKMANN



BOB MCCLLENAHAN COURTESY VISIT NAPA VALLEY



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ROUND POND ESTATE

PHOTOS THIS
SPREAD CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT Napa
Valley Welcome Center;
Round Pond Estate
terrace; Foggy vineyard;
Mill tasting table; CIA
at Greystone; A toast
with red wine; Culinary
Institute of America in
the Fall.



JOSIAH ROE COURTESY VISIT NAPA VALLEY.JPG



BOB MCCLLENAHAN



THIS PHOTO Napa Valley Vine Trail.

«recognize the aromas of the items we had just inhaled: lychee, pink grapefruit and pineapple pointed to a sauvignon blanc, while maraschino cherries, anise and chocolate pointed to a cabernet sauvignon during our guessing game. “This is about training your brain,” our educator said, “and your palate will follow.”

Napa has been a winemaking region since the first winery was established by Charles Krug in 1861, and by 1889 there were more than 140 wineries in operation. The Napa wine scene chugged along at a moderate pace until 1976 when a blind tasting in Paris pitted cabernet sauvignons and chardonnays from California against the best French wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy. When the blind tasting was finished, judges gave top honors to a 1973 Napa Chateau Montelena chardonnay made by winemaker Mike Grgich. The wine world was stunned and the Napa Valley rocketed into prominence.

A few years later winemaker Mike opened his own winery — Grgich Wine Estates — and today he crafts a Paris Tasting Commemorative Chardonnay that recreates his award-winning wine. Reliving a bit of history seemed like the perfect way to wrap up our Napa Valley experience, and as we swirled, sniffed and sipped, we called out words to describe the taste: “crisp, citrus, tropical, toasty, apple, pear.” Right or wrong didn’t really matter. But our new confidence did. **T&T**

Culinary Institute of America at Copia
www.ciaatcopia.com

Culinary Institute of America at Greystone
www.ciarestaurantgroup.com/gatehouse-restaurant/

Grgich Wine Estates
www.grgich.com

Honig Vineyard and Winery
www.honigwine.com

The Restaurant at CIA Copia
www.ciaatcopia.com/the-restaurant-at-cia-copia/

Round Pond Estate
www.roundpond.com

Silverado Resort and Spa
www.silveradoresort.com

St. Supery Vineyards and Winery
www.stsupery.com

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Cook

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ROUND POND ESTATE

SERVES 4

Beet Salad with Peaches

A TRIBUTE TO the passing from spring to summer from Round Pond Estate's Chef Jamie Prouten.

Red Beets 3, baseball size

Golden Beets
3, baseball size

**Round Pond Italian
Varietal Extra Virgin Olive
Oil**¹ ¼ cup

Salt 1 Tbs

Black Pepper 1 tsp

**Round Pond Estate
Cabernet-Merlot Red
Wine Vinegar**¹ ½ cup

Water 1 cup

**Round Pond Estate Blood
Orange Olive Oil**¹ 3 Tbs

Sherry Vinegar 1 Tbs

Salt 1 Tbs

Peaches 2, sliced

Goat Cheese 2 oz

Hazelnuts 4 Tbs, toasted

Radishes 4, thinly sliced

Fresh Tarragon Leaves
¼ cup, sliced

1 TOSS the beets in the extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper. Place in a baking dish and add the red wine vinegar and water. Cover with foil and bake at 375°F for about 2 hours.

2 WHEN the beets have cooled, remove the skin by wiping with a kitchen towel. Cut into 1-inch cubes and place in a mixing bowl. Add blood orange olive oil, sherry vinegar and salt to the bowl and toss. Place the seasoned beets on a platter or in a large bowl and top with the remaining ingredients to complete the salad.

¹ Round pond olive oils and vinegars are available online at www.roundpond.com or you can use whatever similar products are available to you.

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