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Discovery

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The landscape never changes, the sun is typically shining and the same classic wineries have lined Highway 29 for ages, but Napa is not standing still. New wineries are opening, old dining rooms are being revived by newly arrived chefs, and local businesses are updating and modernizing for increasingly sophisticated visitors.

WHERE TO STAY

SENZA

4066 Howard Lane, Napa

Telephone (707) 253-0337

Website www.senzahotel.com

Rooms 23

Suites 18

Rates \$225–\$700

The Senza is a hip and modern new addition to the city of Napa, offering luxurious accommodations and sweeping views of the surrounding vineyards. Vintners Craig and Kathryn Hall of Hall Wines purchased the property, formerly La Residence, in 2006 and have completely rebuilt and expanded. The grounds are dotted with contemporary artwork, from whimsical butterfly mobiles to abstract sculptures and statues from the Halls' private collection. Rooms are stylish and comfortable, with gas

fireplaces and custom-designed furniture that mirrors the modern aesthetic. The spacious suites include private patios or decks and lavish bathrooms featuring soaking tubs and two-person showers. For the best views select one of the vineyard suites, with glass doors that open directly onto the vineyard.

WHERE TO EAT

ATLAS SOCIAL

1124 First St., Napa

Telephone (707) 258-2583

Website www.atlassocialnapa.com

Open Daily

Cost Plates \$5–\$42

Corkage \$15

Atlas Social owners Michael and Christina Gyetvan have figured out the formula for creating Napa restaurants popular with both locals and tourists, mixing terrific food with succinct wine lists. The hat trick to their empire—which already includes Azzuro Pizzeria & Enoteca and Norman Rose Tavern—is Atlas Social. The restaurant is cozy, with modern elements, dark colors and plenty of wood accents. The food focuses on global-themed plates made for sharing. Highlights include a crisply fried egg with bacon jam, melt-in-your-mouth ricotta dumplings with tomato sauce and smoked mozzarella, and braised pork belly tacos. The wine list is an inspired, tight selection of about 100 bottles, one-third of them offered by the glass and with hardly any priced above \$55.

CICCIO

6770 Washington St., Yountville

Telephone (707) 945-1000

Website www.ciccionapavalley.com

Open Dinner, Wednesday to Sunday

Cost Entrées \$10–\$20

Corkage \$25 for domestic wine, \$30 for international

Once a neighborhood grocery store, Ciccio retains an old-time feel, with vintage scales and posters. Casual, friendly and boisterous, yet somehow still decorous, Ciccio applies the form and flavors of Italian cooking to fresh local ingredients. The result is comfort food with a little extra snap. Chef Polly Lappetito's wood-fired oven adds smokiness to roasted artichokes, asparagus and a silk-textured pork chop. Pancetta sneaks richness into wax beans, and a traditional sprinkling of garlicky breadcrumbs adds crunch to broccoli rabe. Pastas attain the right texture, striking a true Italian balance with flavorful sauces; Roman cacio e pepe is the star. Soups provide heartiness to counter Yountville's cool evenings. Pizza toppings hit the mark atop soft, pillowy crusts.

It's also a wine-friendly environment, as you might expect from an establishment owned by the winegrowing Altamura family. The short wine list prices local and imported choices at retail, but no one blinks if you bring in up to two bottles for a corkage fee.

EVANGELINE

1226 Washington St., Calistoga

Telephone (707) 341-3131

Website www.evangelinenapa.com

Open Daily

Cost Entrées \$14–\$24

Corkage Free for first bottle, \$15 thereafter

This French-style bistro is infused with Creole zing. Chef Brandon Sharp, of the Solbar restaurant at the nearby Solage resort, heads up the culinary team, with Gustavo Rios on hand as executive chef. The food is casual but serious, with offerings such as shrimp étouffée and oyster stew. The blackened petrale sole po'boy has a slow burn and provides a lighter alternative to this often-heavy sandwich, while the croque marin is a decadent grilled cheese laced with bacon and topped with a fried egg.

The wine list is limited to about 50 choices, but it's a smart selection; there are also 15 wines on draft or by the glass. The interior of the dining room is long and slender, done in dark wood, but the real action is outside in the shady courtyard, lined with red brick. Service is nimble and skilled—something you don't always find in such an easygoing environment.

1313 MAIN

1313 Main St., Napa

Telephone (707) 258-1313

Website www.1313main.com

Open Dinner, Tuesday to Sunday; brunch, Sunday

Cost Entrées \$20–\$28; tasting menu \$65

Corkage \$25

Best of Award of Excellence

This bar and restaurant is overflowing with fabulous wines, including a wide array of aged bottles dating to the 1970s. The list, which runs to 1,300 entries, provides an eclectic mix of Napa history through scores of vintages of great Cabernets while also embracing a focused selection of star wines with a global reach. Pick a country or region and you'll likely encounter something special. Executive chef Adam Ross presides over a tidy yet inspired menu that emphasizes seasonal entrées and exotic offerings, many from the restaurant's on-site garden. There's a nightly five-course tasting menu with dozens of wine pairing options, and a Sunday brunch. Mains include sturgeon in brick dough, oxtail ravioli and lavender-smoked duck breast. There's also a menu of bar snacks, from polenta fries to chicken liver mousse.

TORC

1140 Main St., Napa

Telephone (707) 252-3292

Website www.torcnapa.com

Open Dinner, daily

Cost Entrées \$17–\$46

Corkage \$20

Chef Sean O'Toole, who previously cooked at Quince and Cotogna in San Francisco, has a curious mind. Appetizers such as gently spicy Indian pakora filled with curried sweet potato can share table space with juicy fried quail garnished with black garlic and kumquats. O'Toole's creations pop with flavor while achieving an elusive balance, capable of supporting a good wine without getting in its way. Opened in late 2013, Torc quickly established itself as a local favorite for shirtsleeve dinners in downtown Napa. And it's not just the mouthwatering roast chicken, which sneaks in a subtle licorice hint that makes it an irresistible complement to Napa's rich reds. You might find boar cracklings in the agnolotti with Sonoma game meats, and a hint of cocoa in the short rib, which is so tender it yields under the weight of a fork. This modern-style restaurant, with high ceilings and rich wood textures on the walls, eschews tablecloths but pours wine into fine crystal glasses. Casually dressed service staff show enough finesse to make dining pleasurable. The wine list, organized by O'Toole's wife, Cynthia, weaves between California and Old World bottlings, with a few standouts from Washington, Oregon and Australia.

WINERIES TO VISIT

B CELLARS

703 Oakville Cross Road, Oakville

Telephone (877) 229-9939

Website www.bcellars.com

Open By appointment only

Cost Tasting and tours \$55–\$125

Save your appetite for a visit to B Cellar's chic new tasting room, which offers a selection of Cabernet blends and single-vineyard wines paired with delectable bites. Cofounders Jim Borsack and Duffy Keys aim for a food-friendly style of wine and have designed their hospitality house around a full demonstration kitchen. Guests can nosh on artfully crafted small plates such as an heirloom squash agnolotti with black truffles paired with a super Tuscan blend, or sip single-vineyard Syrah poured alongside braised short ribs.

Enjoy a glass of white wine as you tour the estate's pristine grounds, with a culinary garden and vineyards, followed by a sit-down tasting. Choices range from a three-course meal with limited-production wines served in the garden to a tasting of the winery's Beckstoffer Vineyard Cabernets in the luxuriously appointed wine cave.

HALL

401 St. Helena Highway (Highway 29), St. Helena

Telephone (707) 967-2626

Website www.hallwines.com

Open Daily

Cost Tours and tastings \$30–\$100

Driving by on Highway 29, you can't miss the enormous, 35-foot-tall stainless-steel rabbit leaping through the Hall vineyard. The winery's new hospitality center has plenty of art on display, such as the colorful glass panels hanging over the tasting bar that refract light from the surrounding windows. There are even modern art installations inside the winery, hanging above fermentation tanks. There's plenty to explore: Visitors can watch winery production from various spots within the building, wander the gardens and view the array of art displayed throughout the estate, or book a tour that pairs wine with contemporary art. Hall's Napa Cabernets are top-notch, as are its Pinot Noirs under the Walt label. —*Aaron Romano*

HESTAN

6548 Washington St., Yountville

Telephone (707) 945-1002

Website www.hestan.com

Open Daily

Cost Tastings start at \$20

A welcome addition to downtown Yountville, the Hestan tasting room is architecturally modern, with a comfortable, airy lounge atmosphere. Proprietor Stanley Cheng is also founder of one of the largest cookware manufacturers in the United States, and the tasting room has plenty of his high-end products on display, including the Williams-Sonoma line and hand-hammered copper pieces from Italy's Ruffoni family. Wines from all three of the brands that Cheng owns—Hestan, Stephanie and Meyer—are served, giving wine lovers a chance to sample the Cabernet-, Merlot- or Chardonnay-based bottlings made by winemakers Thomas Brown and Jeff Gaffner.

ODETTE

5998 Silverado Trail, Napa

Telephone (707) 224-7533

Website www.odetteestate.com

Open Daily, by appointment only

Cost Tastings \$15–\$60

Odette Estate is the newest addition to the PlumpJack Group. Tucked into a pocket of the Stags Leap District, the winery allows you to sample and purchase all the wines from its portfolio, including Cade, PlumpJack, Adaptation and Odette. Continuing its trend of fostering organic and sustainable vineyards and winemaking, the 45-acre estate includes an LEED-certified winery, with a green, living roof and shipping containers repurposed as office and lab space.

The winery connects to the visitors center via caves that span 18,000 square feet. Tastings are held by appointment and tailored to guests, whether it be a relaxed wine-and-cheese pairing, an educational tour or private tasting. The sleek, modern and eco-friendly building is open and airy, with a porch that looks out onto the estate vineyard.-*A.R.*

ORIN SWIFT

1325 Main St., St. Helena

Telephone (707) 967-9179

Website www.orinswift.com

Open Daily

Cost Tastings start at \$10

Dave Phinney's popular, distinctive Orin Swift wines are available to sample in his new tasting room in downtown St. Helena. It's a narrow space but makes an impact, with three unique walls, one made from stone, one paneled with reclaimed wood and a third covered with steel plates salvaged from a battleship. Tasting takes place at a concrete counter and a selection of different flights is offered. Orin Swift is perhaps best known for its blends, such as the Cabernet-based Papillon, a white called Mannequin and the Petite Sirah-based Machete. The tasting room also stocks samples of the rest of the Orin Swift portfolio, including D66, which is made from Phinney's Grenache vineyard in France, as well as wines only available at the tasting room.

PHIFER PAVITT

4660 Silverado Trail N., Calistoga

Telephone (707) 942-4787

Website www.phiferpavittwine.com

Open By appointment only

Cost Tastings \$40

Phifer Pavitt is a hidden gem, a warm and friendly tasting room with plenty of style. The building is the epitome of a refined, rustic, eco-chic aesthetic. The winery is constructed from parts of a 19th-century barn found nearby, which was taken down board by board and rebuilt. Inside, the tasting room is elegant, with beautiful reclaimed wood walls, chandeliers made from recycled snow fencing, and a floating tasting bar composed of a suspended slab of black walnut cut from a fallen tree. The lineup includes a terrific Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc.

OLD FAVORITES MADE NEW

There have been some impressive renovations in Napa Valley in recent years. **Charles Krug** (www.charleskrug.com) has a stunning new tasting room and hospitality center made from reclaimed redwood from the winery's original wine tanks. **Sterling Vineyards** (www.sterlingvineyards.com) got a facelift; the famous aerial tram is still the only one of its kind in Napa. **Stags Leap Wine Cellars**

(www.cask23.com) has a glamorous new tasting room that features views of the historic Fay Vineyard and Palisade Mountains. **Joseph Phelps Vineyards** (www.josephphelps.com) is also expanding its vineyard views, turning out a grand center with private tasting salons and a full commercial kitchen.

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