

Make Your Own Wine at Napa Valley Wineries

By Ian White on September 12, 2012 5:00 PM



Image Courtesy of Franciscan Winery

While starting a winery is still exceedingly difficult and expensive, you can now create your own wine with ease.

Experiences range from quick and fun to serious and studious. At the end, you'll have a custom wine and label, a good buzz, and a better understanding of winemaking.

Here are a few favorites that are open to the public:

District 4's Build a Blend is perhaps the most user-friendly blending experience in the Valley. The tasting room is conveniently located in downtown Napa. When your blend is complete, they'll help you bottle it, cork it, capsule it, and design a custom label. Reservations are not required, but it's a good idea to book ahead.

Michael Mondavi Family offers the **Winemaker for a Day** program where, like District 4, you get to take home your custom wine with all the frills. However, expect to spend more time learning and tasting and a little less time playing. Occurs on weekdays, book in advance.

Franciscan Winery's blending seminar packs everything into one hour and starts at 3 p.m. daily. The class is hands-on and you get out in time for one more tasting before dinner.



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Image Courtesy of Judd's Hill

Fontanella Family Winery throws blending parties with an hour of barrel sampling and instructions. They also have a take-home blending kit you can purchase and you can even order a case of your own blend. Reservations required.

Conn Creek is one of the pioneers in blending experiences and offers a two-hour seminar for up to ten people, twice daily, by appointment. Expect a knowledgeable educator, a guided barrel tasting, easy but complete instructions, and a bottle of your blend with your own label.

Judd's Hill, another blending experience pioneer, has a "**Bottle Blending Day Camp**," where you'll be given a variety of Bordeaux-style barrel samples and then get to hand-bottle it, label it, and take it home. The beauty of this experience is that you can usually make reservations within 24 hours. They have options that range from a single bottle to a full barrel.



Raymond Vineyards' blending experience is offered in a stainless steel room with black lights and they provide you with crazy hats, reflective chrome cover-ups, and top-notch equipment. The experience is as wild as it is informative, and they'll make as much wine as you want and keep it on file for future production. Book in advance.

Paraduxx's blending seminar examines what Cab, Zin and Merlot bring to a blend. Taste the wine in barrels, make a blend, and then sample current releases to compare.

Other wineries, like **Freemark Abbey**, offer fantastic blending experiences and contests for wine club members. Keep an eye out for this option if looking to join a club.

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under Napa

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