

Touring in stately & beautiful Sonoma Wine Country

FRANK MANGIO



Taste of Wine

Big, stately and beautiful are the first descriptors that come to mind when recalling my trip to Sonoma Wine Country recently. So big, it cannot be limited to one column. It demands a two part recollection.

After all, Sonoma is the birthplace of California wine, with the first winegrapes planted in Fort Ross about 1812. The oldest premium winery, Buena Vista, was founded in 1857. Founding families still

dominate the landscape, as Sonoma County boasts 370 wineries with some 1,800 winegrape growers settled in 13 diverse AVA's, or appellations.

It feels like a country disguised as a county...a little bit of Italy, a little bit of France, but clearly California coastal in quality.

It was a quick direct air trip from San Diego to Santa Rosa, a bustling town of 167,000.

A few minutes north of Healdsburg, the prettiest town in Sonoma, and just east of Highway 101, is the Jordan Wine Estate, in the Alexander Valley making only high quality Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Founded in 1972 by Tom and Sally Jordan, well-traveled lovers of fine French wine and cuisine, whose dream it was to make Jordan a titan of world-class Cabernet, one that was elegant and could be enjoyed immediately. The wines would be fruit-forward with balanced, silky tannins.

The inaugural 1976 vintage was nurtured by wine-

maker Rob Davis, who makes Jordan wines to this day. The latest Cab vintage is the 2009 (\$53.), a Top Ten Taste pick of mine in last week's column, was described by Davis as "a great symphony, hitting all the right notes. We had dreamed about making a wine like the 2009 for so long; we are ecstatic."

The Alexander Valley was a prescient selection for Jordan. Located at the Northern end of Sonoma County, with The Russian River winding up its west side and Mayacamas Mountains on the eastern borders. While the warm locations are best for Bordeaux grapes like Cabernet and Chardonnay, its gentle inland slopes, or "cotes" as they're called in France, are reminiscent of Burgundy.

Although Jordan has 1,200 acres on the property, from valley to lakes, to peaks, there are vast areas of trees, rocks and vistas; lots of room to stretch out and enjoy the over 1,000 acres of land, navigable by vehicle and explorable. There are 110 acres of grapevines and 18 acres of olive trees, gardens and pasture land.

Since 2005, Tom and Sally Jordan's son, John Jordan, left the world of law and became the present owner of Jordan.

He has taken Jordan to more enhanced fruit sourcing, searching the Sonoma district for the best grapes possible.

"Jordan wines have always remained true to what the Bordeaux style is meant to be... balanced, food-friendly, happy to be a part of the pleasures of the table, and not to dominate," Jordan explained. Going forward, he is continuing to constantly improve all facets of wine and food quality. "We have a resident culinary staff for hospitality programs and believe that food

and wine go together. Wine is not a stand-alone beverage, so we work on Jordan as a sense of place with our fresh-ingredient garden," Jordan pointed out.

Jordan makes 100,000 cases, including 1/3 Chardonnay and 2/3 Cabernet. Most are consumed in restaurants, resorts, cruise lines and direct sales.

Jordan's new Estate Tour, with panoramic views of Napa Valley and Sonoma is offered by appointment Thursdays through Mondays beginning September 5th and priced at \$120. per person. Reservations are now being taken. For questions call 800-654-1213. For more, visit www.jordanwinery.com.

Next week, we'll cover the rest of Sonoma and select wineries.

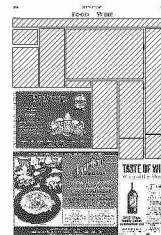
Wine Bytes

Falkner Winery in Temecula is celebrating its 13th Anniversary July 5 to July 7. Free jazz performances Sat. and Sun. with wine tours, raffles drawings, major wine discounts, and outdoor BBQs. Details at (951) 676-8231 ext. 1

Il Fornaio in Del Mar has a Festa Regionale featuring the cooking and wines of Sicily now through July 14. Special three-course tasting menu for \$30.99 and a wine flight for \$13.99. RSVP at (888)-ITALIAN.

The 21st Annual Bastille Day Benefit Event is July 13 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Fairbanks Ranch Clubhouse in Rancho Santa Fe. It's a day of food and wine pairings, including Silver Oak, Duckhorn, Ferrari-Carano and more. Silent Auction. \$150. RSVP at (619) 546-5390.

Solare Ristorante at Liberty Station in Pt. Loma has a pizza cooking class July 13 at 10:30 a.m. Starts from



making the dough through each step. Details at (619) 270-9670.

Frank Mangio is a renowned wine connoisseur certified by Wine Spectator. His library can be viewed at www.tasteofwinetv.com. (Average Google certified 900 visits per day) He is one of the top five wine commentators on the Web. Reach him at mangiomp@aol.com.



The grand French chateau of Jordan Wine Estate in the Alexander Valley of Sonoma includes two lakes on 1,200 acres. Photo courtesy of Jordan Winery