

Wine Country Dining: Spilled Milk #21

Places to eat, drink & relax in Napa (and beyond)



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Wine country in Northern California is a major tourist attraction.

But unlike many others in that populist category, the food (and wine) experience is incredible. It's hard to find a crappy meal in Napa Valley.

That presents a different kind of the problem—with so many places to choose from, how can you possibly narrow it down? If you're heading there anytime soon, I hate to tell you: you're already too late for a table at the French Laundry (might I suggest [Ad Hoc](#), [Bouchon](#), or waiting in line at [Bouchon Bakery](#) instead?) or at any of a dozen of the more famous eateries sprinkled around Napa within a reasonable driving distance.

I like the central location of Napa and I always have work that brings me there. From lecturing at [the CIA at Copia](#) to next month's [BottleRock Festivals](#), where I will get to return to one of the most beautiful spots in America. Rent a car, you will want to explore the area every day, trust me on that.

Here's where to eat while in the Napa Valley region on a more modest budget. And a few recommenders for some really special meals.

Oakville Grocery Co.



I love establishments with history, and Oakville Grocery on Highway 29 fits that bill. In operation since 1881, this grocery claims to be the oldest in California. I can't claim to know if that's true or not, but I will attest to the quality of their muffulettas and wood-fired pizzas, in addition to incredible olive oils, coffee, baked good and more. For first timers to this part of the state, it's a must.