

leSoleil

Great wines and great tables of Napa Valley

MARC TREMBLAY

Browse the most famous wine region of the United States, an hour from San Francisco. Discover passionate wine producers who develop new generations of complex wines of Napa Valley, to meet the highest expectations of "wine lovers". Enjoy international cuisine revisited through bold leaders that harmonize wine and food.

Napa Valley is a little American Tuscany. It enjoys a Mediterranean climate thanks to two mountain ranges that protect the Pacific Ocean freshness Valley (west) and the heat of the Central Valley (east).

In 1981, the first region in California to get the name AVA (American Viticultural Area). There are 16 sub-appellations AVA that divide the territory into zones of about 50 km long and 8 km wide, according to soils and microclimates. It is a small territory ... the eighth of the cultivated area in Bordeaux. We are harvesting only 4% of all Californian grapes for wine production. Yet there are more than 850 wineries and cellars (*wineries*).

In 1981, the first region in California to get the name AVA (American Viticultural Area). There are 16 sub-appellations AVA that divide the territory into zones of about 50 km long and 8 km wide, according to soils and microclimates. It is a small territory ... the eighth of the cultivated area in Bordeaux. We are harvesting only 4% of all Californian grapes for wine production. Yet there are more than 850 wineries and cellars (*wineries*).

Napa Valley is invaded every weekend by amateur hordes of wine and good food. The Beaulieu names, Opus One, Beringer, Stag's Leap, Castello di Amorosa, Rubicon Estate (Coppola) and many others, are among the classic wine tasting stops. For my second visit after 15 years, I go out of their way to know the diversity of Napa Valley, meeting producers and five personalities of the wine

world. Who says great wines says haute cuisine, and I also visit famous restaurants and chefs of the highest caliber. After reading, I recommend going to listen to these exciting characters in short video interview with the corresponding hyperlinks in the text.



Jean-Charles Boisset of
Raymond Vineyards

SPECIAL
COLLABORATION, MARC
TREMBLAY

Raymond Vineyards: Jean-Charles Boisset shakes clichés elegantly ...

Continuing northward, I change appellation area and find myself in Rutherford, a soil slightly warmer where producers are rooted in decades. Raymond was a Beringer Vineyards property in 1936 and Raymond in 1970. In 2009 the company Boisset Family Estates, well established in France, California and even in Quebec (Neige ice cider), acquired it. By meeting the colorful president Jean-Charles Boisset, I realize that I'll lose all my usual reference *winery* in Napa Valley. We are in a red room (the Red Room) at the cabaret setting. Jean-Charles loves to confuse the visitor by transposing it into another world, to have fun and educate. Music, theatrical performance here means for initiating wine with playfulness. Another example is the Winemaker for a Day experience allows to develop its own laboratory assembly and to leave with his bottles with personalized labels.

Viticulture is not less serious thing at Raymond Vineyards, since it applies the principles of biodynamics, a methodology from the reflections of the philosopher Rudolph Steiner Austrian, involving a holistic view of the farm as an autonomous ecosystem. In particular, this means no pesticides, no monoculture, use of compost and harvested according to lunar cycles. An institution may obtain biodynamic Demeter certification. A natural approach to Jean-Charles, "born in the vine" in Burgundy, which advocates elegance and participate in this great turn of California for fine wines, more eloquent.



Napaclip4 from Marc Tremblay is Vimeo.

To stay: Embassy Suites hotel and the Wine Country Inn

The city of Napa is south of the valley and is a convenient place to stay to explore the *wineries*. There is also a good concentration of restaurants nearby and return to the hotel is easy. I hosted a few days in Napa Valley Embassy Suites, the Hilton chain. All rooms are comfortable suites, modern and simple decor. The building is built around a large atrium with garden, forest and waterfalls. The formula used to control directly to cook his breakfast from the buffet, like the all-inclusive South. From the hotel, I put directly on the route 29 north for vineyards.

A rustic escape me is also offered to Wild Country Inn, just after St. Helena. The place is romantic and peaceful, in an atmosphere of English gardens, carefully furnished. The patio of my luxury cottage overlooks a landscape of vine rows dominated by mountains and blue skies. Here I am in the heart of the northern part of Napa Valley and discoveries are possible in three directions: Calistoga, Howell Mountain and all the St. Helena sector. There are 50 acclaimed restaurants and 15 wineries within 8 km.

To get there efficiently

Air Canada offers direct flights from Montreal to San Francisco throughout the year, up to two per day in the summer! The car is the best way to discover the vineyards of Napa Valley, but it is possible to do cycling and there is even a tourist train that runs along Route 29.

This report was made possible through the collaboration of wine producers and interviewed leaders in support of the organization Visit Napa Valley (www.visitnapavalley.com), air transport provided by Air Canada (www.aircanada.com) and hospitality wineries, restaurants and hotels following:

- www.michaelmondavifamilyestate.com
- www.pineridgevineyards.com
- www.raymondvineyards.com
- www.viader.com
- www.vgschateaupotelle.com
- www.latoque.com
- www.terrestaurant.com
- www.morimotonapa.com
- www.embassysuitesnapahotel.com
- www.winecountryinn.com