

R H A P S O D Y

DECEMBER 2015



LUPITA NYONG'O

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

NAPA VALLEY
GOES ORGANIC

HARVEY KEITEL
STAYS IN THE PICTURE

TRUMAN CAPOTE
AN EARLY STORY

ART BASEL
MIAMI BEACH
THE BIGGEST PLAYERS

UNITED 
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



FIRST PERSON, FAR FLUNG

HARVESTING NAPA VALLEY

Exploring the eco-conscious creations
of California wine country

STORY *Ramona Ausubel* PHOTOGRAPHY *Marianna Jamadi*

NAPA VALLEY

increases resilience. In addition to wine, Frog's Leap also sells its produce to restaurants, and the farm permits Williams to do something very unusual in the wine business: Instead of relying on contract labor to tend the hundreds of acres of dry-farmed vines, all his employees work full-time and are trained in everything, rotating through the crops as the seasons change. The crew is the human part of this ecosystem. "I was walking in the vinyard with my son the other night," Williams recalls, "and he showed me a little vine spur that had been tied back to the main trellis." The younger Williams was impressed that a worker knew the vine needed another branch, and that he took the time to tie it back so it wouldn't get hit by a tractor. "He's never going to do that unless he knows he's coming back," Williams says.

Upstream, at the foot of the mountains and in a swath of soil filled with glassy black obsidian, is a vinyard that was planted when the hillsides around it were still prune orchards and cow pasture. Gene Kirkham, Casa Nuestra's owner, sprayed pesticides once when he first bought the place in the late '70s, because that's what everyone did.

He remembers walking the rows listening to the bugs and bees and birds, but after the spray, all he heard was quiet; everything that wasn't a grapevine had died or left. He has been growing organically ever since. There are solar panels in the vineyard and a flock of sheep that heads into the vines after harvest to weed and fertilize—though to the animals it will just seem like snack time.

Not all the vineyards I visit have livestock, but all the winemakers I talk to tell me about the other creatures who share their land: Bats eat mosquitos, owls hunt rats, bees pollinate the other plants and trees.

There is a lot of storytelling in wine. There's the story of the place, the soil, the season. There's the story of the family who owns the winery. There's the way we talk about wine itself: Over the course of the week I'm in Napa, winemakers describe notes of everything from raspberry and white peach to road tar. A sommelier introduces one glass as "nervy," and another as "stern, almost mean—in a good way."

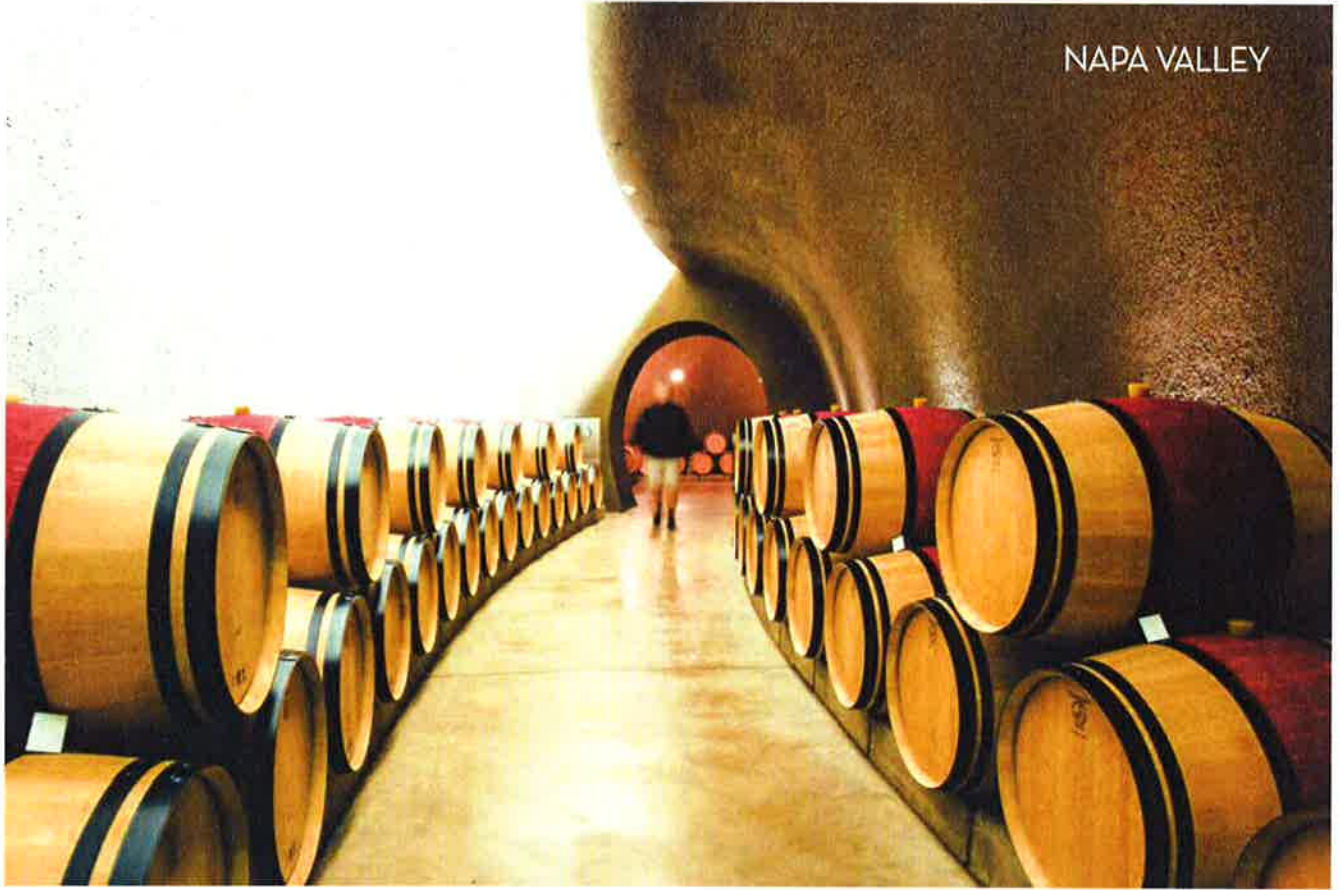
Some of the growing practices have an element of storytelling to them, too. Raymond Vineyards, which >

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FIRST TASTE

Casa Nuestra
owner Gene
Kirkham tests
for ripeness



THE AGING PROCESS

Above: the caves
at Cade Estate;
left: digestive herbs at
Raymond Vineyards



sits in the flat basin of the valley floor, is certified not just organic but biodynamic. This involves, among other things, certain “preparations” of compost made with digestive herbs like yarrow, chamomile, and stinging nettle. This compost is buried between the equinoxes in a hollow cow horn and later turned into a tea to be misted over the vines. Caleb Mosley at Quintessa says, “I know this sounds kind of nutty, but you can think of it as a way of capturing the forces and senses of the winter or summer season and passing on that power to the vines when they need it.” However the elixir strikes you, compost is unquestionably good for the soil. As John Williams at Frog’s Leap says, “It made sense to me that a living soil was more likely to produce a wine of place.”

One afternoon, on my way to Cade Estate Winery, I turn up a windy road that takes me through oak trees brittle with drought. When California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom was mayor of San Francisco, he spent a lot of time trying to convince contractors to build more efficient buildings. Cade, which the politician co-founded in 2005 with partners John Conover and Gordon Getty, is Newsom walking his talk. The design of the winery and caves is modern and sleek. The building, 1,800 feet up Howell Mountain, high above the fog line and overlooking the valley, is constructed from recycled glass and steel and a concrete made from >