

## CellarPass app makes wine touring simple

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About eight months ago, in December, was the last time I remember using my cellphone for its originally intended purpose.

Only in a moment of utter desperation, after missing my flight from Italy to Switzerland and becoming stranded alone in Europe, did I pull it out of my pocket with the intention of dialing a number and speaking to someone on the other end.

Today, at 22 years old, the use of cellphone apps is essential to my everyday life. I use apps to schedule appointments at the doctor, order take-out from my favorite eateries, remind myself to take my vitamins, reserve tables at restaurants and hotels, check in for flights, shop online, and keep up with world news. According to an Apple announcement last month, there are approximately 1.2 million apps available for download in the App Store. My relationship with my cellphone, much like many others belonging to my generation, has developed from a simple way to keep in touch, into an absolute lifeline.

Naturally, after my recent interview with St. Helena's Sarah Elliman, co-founder with her husband Jonathan of CellarPass — a website and now a mobile app that aims to assist users with easy reservations for wine tastings throughout California — I decided *See TOUR, Page A8*

to put the app to the test and plan my first wine tasting experience using the services that I had just discovered.

The original concept of CellarPass originated in 2006 when Elliman said she realized that wine country was lacking a service that would help both locals and

tourists quickly and easily plan wine-related activities in the area. "Being able to book a wine tasting experience, specifically, was a very missing element here," she said. Four years later, CellarPass was launched, featuring wineries within regions ranging from the Napa Valley and Sonoma County, to the Central Coast and the Sierra Foothills.

Readers who have yet to permanently attach themselves to their mobile devices may wonder why this technological advance trumps picking up a phone and calling a winery directly to make a reservation. Elliman's rebuttal is that CellarPass' filter function allows users to make educated decisions and reservations based on very specific likes and interests such as "family friendly," "scenic views," or "chardonnay," without having to thumb through endless pages of information through various websites or making multiple phone calls. "It really is a one-stop destination for guests," she said.

Minutes after downloading the free mobile application, Elliman's words echoed in my head as I found myself overwhelmed while scrolling through pages and pages of wineries and tasting rooms from Calistoga to Napa. Being an inexperienced wine-taster, I found solace in the filtering option and narrowed my search based on my fondness of sparkling wine. Mumm Napa won me over within seconds with its rave reviews written

by other CellarPass users and its scenic views. After simply giving my name and email address, my reservation was confirmed for my party of two the following afternoon.

It was a balmy 89 degrees that Monday, and the Mumm mist machines were in full swing layering the terrace in a cooling dew. The view was just as amazing as others had claimed from our umbrella-protected table on the patio, and we were immediately

greeted by a friendly staff member toting a dish of crackers and a tasting menu.

Moments after choosing the classic sparkling wine flight, three glasses for \$18, we were sipping on Mumm's Cuveé M, Brut Rosé and Brut Prestige. Our server also gave us an opportunity to try a new favorite, the Pinot Meunier, as well as a glass of the Cuveé M Red, a beautifully colored sparkling pinot noir.

A personal favorite of the day was the Brut Rosé, which I learned from our knowledgeable pourer would pair excellently with Thai cuisine, which I love.

As I finished off each glass, I became excited at the thought of using the app again in the near future to plan another outing. Other local wineries featured on CellarPass include Caymus Vineyards, Raymond Vineyards, Far Niente, Plumpjack Winery, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, and Whitehall Lane Winery, among many others.

Elliman said the majority of CellarPass' success is because she and her team are putting the wants and needs of their users above all else. "It's really exciting to see this homegrown company, locally owned, playing with



the big dogs," she said. "Little old CellarPass is nipping at the heels of some big companies, and it's succeeding. It has taken a lot of dedication and hard work. I am amazed and thrilled by how far we have come."

For more information visit [CellarPass.com](http://CellarPass.com) or download

the CellarPass mobile app.

*(Hannah Popick, who grew up in St. Helena, has dreams of becoming a writer. Besides working at Solage Calistoga, in the fall she will continue her studies at Santa Rosa Junior College, majoring in English.)*



*Hannah Popick photo*

**A classic sparkling wine flight at Mumm Napa includes three sparklers for \$18.**