

## Rancho Mirage dinner series spotlights Napa wines

By Pamela Bieri, Special to The Desert Sun 4:16 p.m. PST November 8, 2016



(Photo: Submitted)

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Napa Valley vineyards are the focus of this season's Le Serate di Vino at Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort & Spa in Rancho Mirage.

Raymond Vineyards, a five generation family-owned winery, kicked off the series last month with an elegant four-course wine dinner created by the

Westin's executive chef Joel Delmond, a James Beard honoree. This past weekend, Robert Mondavi Winery, celebrating its 50th anniversary, paired its legendary wines with foie gras, cast iron-seared Maine scallops and venison filet over five courses.

Delmond and his culinary team create the exquisitely paired cuisines for each of the Napa Valley wine dinners held monthly through December. Next up is Trefethen Family Vineyards on Dec. 17.

### The Raymond Dinner

We were invited to participate at the Raymond dinner with wines curated by Tiffany Getten, northern California district sales manager for Boisset Family Estates. Getten explained that Napa's micro climate mountain and valley regions make ideal conditions for growing world-class wines. Raymond Vineyard has 300 acres within three locations — St. Helena Vineyards, Rutherford Vineyards, and Jameson Canyon Vineyards — growing varietals specifically matched to each climate and soil type. The winery produces organic wines through biodynamic practices.

After a reception of amuses — shrimp in garlic wines, mushroom crostini among them — guests were seated at a long, fall-festively set communal table for a first course heirloom tomato carpaccio. The micro-thin red, yellow and orange tomatoes were artfully arranged on a white plate, drizzled with extra virgin olive oil, serrano chile and vinaigrette with a crisp line of black salt edging the plate. A smooth, distinct chardonnay reserve, 2014, complemented this dish.



An heirloom tomato carpaccio and chardonnay reserve. (Photo: Submitted)

For the second course, Chef Delmond presented glazed sweetbread in potato crust with chanterelle mushrooms, and, reversing the usual order of light to heavier wines, a 2014 sauvignon blanc was selected to pair with this dish. The light but crisp sauvignon blanc was an understated, delicate balance to the sweetbread.

Taking full advantage of the tastes of fall, Chef Delmond's Long Island duck breast was stuffed with Fuji apple, chestnuts from local Apple Valley, and roasted in bacon. Celery root puree with calvados sauce completed this dish, served with a robust cabernet sauvignon reserve, 2013.



Joel Delmond, the Westin's executive chef, discusses inspiration for the dishes he created for a recent wine dinner. (Photo: Submitted)

A trio of cheeses — brie de Meaux, Tete de Moine and Tellicherry pepper — were another artful composition served with baby mache, and balanced by

a deep, rich merlot reserve, 2012.

Tiny chocolate morsels of pate de fruit and coffee put the final touches on an elegant wine dinner.