

MAKING THE ROUNDS

With Helen Benefield Billings



# NAPA

*on my mind*



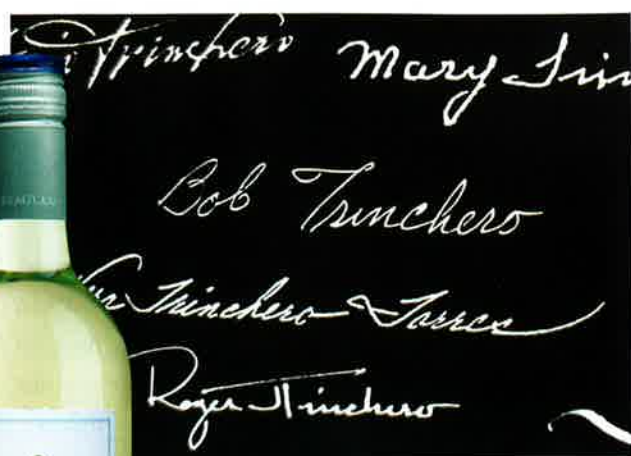
Stunning vista at Chappellet's Pritchard Hill.





Amanda Bevilacqua

of brands ranging from Sutter Home to Folie à Deux and Joel Gott.



Trinchero family signatures

Following an intriguing tour of their wine caves, we found ourselves outside overlooking a gorgeous vineyard vista, with a dazzling array of wines to taste. Especially pleasing was the SeaGlass Sauvignon Blanc from Santa Barbara County, which offered exactly what you'd want in a fruit-forward, tropical style wine and had a clean, crisp acidity.

Also in the mix this afternoon was the 2009 Trinchero Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, from their Chicken Ranch vineyard in Rutherford. This well-balanced Cab displayed a medium ruby color with notes of black cherry and spice.

[www.trincheronapavalley.com](http://www.trincheronapavalley.com)

[www.seaglasswines.com](http://www.seaglasswines.com)

## ❖ Raymond Vineyards

Amiable host Patrick Egan, director of Marketing, met us in The Tasting Room for an informative tour and started us off with Raymond's delectable 2013 Chardonnay. Steps outside led us to the Theater of Nature – a two-acre plot of land that showcases Raymond's impressive commitment to biodynamic farming practices, and is a terrific teaching tool for guests to experience hands-on examples of how the soil, the lunar cycle and many other factors all contribute to the delicate art of winemaking. Most impressive!



Patrick Egan



Raymond Napa Valley Chardonnay



Top: The Red Room

Left: Celeste Dinos, Don Billings and Helen Billings at the Theater of Nature.



The winery mascot is a lovable French bulldog, aptly named Frenchie, whose image can be seen throughout the property. This handsome and oh, so photogenic pooch even boasts his own line of tasty wines. Plush accommodations at Frenchie's winery truly make Raymond a dog-friendly place where pooches of visitors can rest in shady comfort while their owners are busy touring and tasting.

At every turn we encountered eye-catching and chic spaces, all with modern twists, from The Crystal Cellar to the super luxe lounge, where we happily sipped JCB Collection wines created by Jean-Charles Boisset, proprietor of Boisset Family Estates and Raymond Vineyards. Most arresting

of all, perhaps, is the lavish Red Room, where we had the exquisite opportunity to taste a plethora of full-bodied reds from their super efficient wine station. Patrick invited us to sample several reds from their private collection – not to be found on shelves.

Hanging out in The Red Room took the visual stimulation experience into fifth gear. Red velvet adorned the walls and furniture, with wall-to-wall leopard carpeting. Baccarat chandeliers provided the perfect mood lighting and cool fashion books were displayed. Even my favorite crooner of all time, Frank Sinatra, was singing in the background. They have a super stylish bar, card tables, pool table and a gorgeous dining room table upon which sat gigantic Baccarat crystal vases

filled with fragrant white flowers. There simply cannot be a better place to throw a party, I was thinking to myself. Now, how can we make this happen?

[www.raymondvineyards.com](http://www.raymondvineyards.com)

[www.frenchiewinery.com](http://www.frenchiewinery.com)

[www.jeancharlesboisset.com](http://www.jeancharlesboisset.com)

## ❖ Chappellet

Mostly cloudy skies with a light breeze and a threat of rain showers moving in framed this October afternoon, as we made our way up to Chappellet Vineyard, tucked away off Sage Canyon Road in St. Helena. A short walk through the luscious vineyards with Emily Papach, Master Sommelier, and David Francke brought us to a heavenly vista overlooking stunning Pritchard Hill, the setting for this family-owned winery that began in 1967 and where the majority of Chappellet grapes are grown. This 100-