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In Sonoma, restaurants find some normalcy after fires

By Michael Bauer | November 1, 2017 | Updated: November 1, 2017 9:22am

Two weekends ago I went to Napa for an upcoming story, and last weekend I did the same with Sonoma, concentrating on checking out life around Glen Ellen and the Sonoma Plaza after the devastating fires.

I made my first stop at El Molino Central, which has become known for its Mexican food. Diners order at the counter and the food is delivered to the patio or picnic tables in back. The enchiladas suiza (\$12) were excellent, but the special tamales (\$14) filled with ground beef and pork were some of the best I've had. The masa was light and barely held together, letting the filling and the surrounding sauce shine.

While it was business as usual in most places I visited, including the Sonoma Plaza, when we drove on Highway 12 between Glen Ellen and Kenwood, the damage was evident on both sides of the highway.

There were many close calls during the fires, and two prominent wineries barely escaped the flames. However, both Buena Vista and Scribe were welcoming visitors.

At Buena Vista, the oldest commercial winery in California with roots back to 1857, everything was back to normal, even though the winery was surrounded by charred hills.

On Sunday, owner Jean Charles Boisset hosted a special ambassadors event; the night before, the winery had a Halloween party. I could smell smoke in the back reaches of the cave where the fire came nearly to the back wall, but everything else seemed copacetic.