



Rudd Estate owner Samantha Rudd (in black hat) attends a gathering in the estate's waterfront tasting room.

NAPA ✕ A CONCENTRATION OF EXCELLENCE

BY KIM MARCUS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY TAI POWER SEEFF

Napa Valley rose from relative obscurity just half a century ago to become a global leader in fine wine. The region has also developed an extraordinary concentration of world-class restaurants, hotels and leisure offerings. No wine region anywhere draws as many visitors, or treats them so well.

Napa Valley is not the largest wine region in California—its 46,000 acres of vineyards account for only about 4% of the Golden State's wine grape harvest. But with almost 500 wineries and a winemaking history that dates to the gold rush era, it's the most

recognized, led by stellar Cabernet Sauvignons as well as top-flight Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs and a host of other varieties.

Napa fell quiet for the half-century during and after Prohibition, which was repealed in 1933. But in the mid-1960s, a new generation of vintners led by the late Robert Mondavi began to spread the word of Napa's wine quality. Their classrooms were their tasting rooms, not only providing sips of what was in the bottles, but also offering valuable education on what made the region's wines so special.



Press

587 St. Helena Highway, St. Helena **Telephone** (707) 967-0550 **Website** pressnapavalley.com **Open** Dinner, daily **Cost** Expensive **Corkage** \$40

Best of Award of Excellence

Press boasts of having the largest collection of Napa Valley wines in the world, with a wine list almost 60 pages long. It's an impressive mix of classic brands and newer names. Offerings include magnums of Caymus and half-bottles of Mayacamas Cabernet. Vintages go back to the 1960s, and there are plenty of splurges, such as a magnum of Schrader Cellars Old Sparky 2017 (\$1,800).

The dining room balances classic steak house with modern wine country aesthetic. Dark floors, tall white walls and large windows give the space an airy feel, with an outdoor fireplace and vineyard views. There's precision to the food. A hand-cut steak tartare is served with spiced tomato, gruyère, Castelvetrano olives and pea shoots. Steaks, grilled over wood, include some Wagyu options. A 60-day côte de boeuf for two comes with roasted bone marrow and bacon-short rib jam. Sides are tempting, such as a black truffle potato cake or creamed leeks and spinach. The non-steak items have plenty of flair as well, such as charred eggplant and smoked tomato lasagna, or kabocha squash risotto with toasted pepitas, brown butter and a white truffle mousse.

—M.W.

Sam's Social Club

1712 Lincoln Ave., Calistoga **Telephone** (707) 942-4969 **Website** samsocialclub.com **Open** Daily **Cost** Moderate **Corkage** First bottle free, each additional \$20

Located on the grounds of the Indian Springs resort in Calistoga, Sam's Social Club serves fresh American fare—crab cakes, wedge salad, rack of lamb, a bone-in pork chop—prepared simply and deliciously. Some dishes go deeper in richness, such as a mushroom sage risotto with truffle butter, or the rib eye steak frites with bone marrow butter and beef fat fries. The wine list concentrates on Northern California, with many options around or below \$100, such as Flowers Sonoma County Pinot Noir 2017 (\$99).

The dining room is airy, with great natural light and comfortably spaced seating. Olive trees surround the adjacent outdoor seating area, complete with a firepit. At night, steam rises from the geysers that are part of the property's spa.

—M.W.

PROVISIONS, NAPA STYLE

Happily navigating wine country means staying hydrated and not tasting on an empty stomach. Not every winery offers food, so be prepared to nourish yourself along the way. Below are some reliable places for supplies.

Addendum 6476 Washington St., Yountville; thomaskeller.com/addendum
 Chef Thomas Keller is famed for his fine-dining venues, including the *Wine Spectator* Grand Award-winning French Laundry. At Keller's Addendum, foodies flock for dishes such as buttermilk-fried chicken, lobster rolls, pulled pork and ribs. Tip: Order ahead online to skip the lines.

Contimo Provisions 500 First St., Napa; contimnapa.com Located in a former ticket booth outside the Culinary Institute of America at Copia, Contimo is a gem for to-go breakfasts and lunches. The biscuits are fabulous—even better when paired with the homemade pimento cheese spread. Sandwiches include the miso turnip bánh mi and the deceptively simple poached chicken with Meyer lemon marmalade.

Fivetown Grocery 850 Bordeaux Way, Napa; villagenapavalley.com/fivetown-grocery
 With the Meritage Collection's new Vista Collina resort comes a town square surrounded by winery tasting rooms and providing the cozy upscale Fivetown grocery store. It's a convenient stop south of the town of Napa to fuel your journey with deli items and salads, coffee drinks and more.

Oakville Grocery 7856 St. Helena Highway, Oakville; oakvillegrocery.com
 The venerable provisions oasis remains popular for good reason, including sandwiches such as tuna Niçoise or roast beef with olive tapenade, not to mention wood-fired pizzas. Grab a few local items, coffee drinks or baked goods, and take time to browse one of the best retail wine programs in the area.

Oxbow Public Market 610 First Ave., Napa; oxbowpublicmarket.com
 This airy market in downtown Napa is home to restaurants, a coffee bar, a chocolatier, a brewery, a cupcake bakery, a cheese shop and a produce market, all in one location.

There are plenty of quick foods for on-the-go, or just wander around and get hungry.

The Station 1153 Main St., St. Helena; stationsh.com Joel Gott converted an old petrol station in downtown St. Helena into a new must-stop for terrific espresso drinks, doughnuts, pastries and more. Toasts (including sweet potato hummus and smoked salmon options), baguette sandwiches and warm bowls like a chicken yuzu ramen or a Greek grain bowl are convenient to go, or enjoy them on the patio.



Breakfast pastries from the Station

Soda Canyon Store 4006 Silverado Trail, Napa; sodacanyonstore.com
 Do stop at this essential spot on the Silverado Trail. Winemakers chat while waiting for their orders of breakfast burritos and coffees. Lunchtime is a mix of locals and tourists, who come for large sandwiches such as the Best sandwich, with turkey, gorgonzola, fig and olive spread, and the Firehouse, stacking roast beef, Dijon, jalapeños and horseradish cheddar.