

travelinggourmet

WINERIES WITH GREAT FOOD

by Rich Rubin



Photo: Beata 1

If there's one thing your Traveling Gourmet loves, it's good food. About on an equal footing is good wine. So why don't we combine the two and visit some wineries that offer both? We're not talking about your basic cheese and crackers or bowls of olives (though those might well be available), but wineries with a full, chef-devised menu, designed to complement their vintages. Whether you come for just a wine tasting or combine it with some of their wonderful gourmet delights, you really can't go wrong at these spots. So take a seat, peruse the menu (or eagerly await your pre-ordered flight), and let's do some sampling of both the culinary and oenological skills on display.

STONE HILL WINERY HERMANN, MISSOURI

In a town like Hermann, whose winemaking origins are traced back to German settlers, it's no surprise that there's a German feel to the

menu at Stone Hill Winery's wonderful restaurant, Vintage 1847. Named after the year the winery was founded, Vintage is located in the former carriage house and horse barn, and you can sample the chef's creations while enjoying some of the unique wines from this winery that predates the California wine industry and was once the nation's second-largest. Start with some Bavarian pretzel sticks or perhaps their well-known French onion soup before moving on to the hearty mains. The "German trio" gives you a sampling of three specialties: schweineschnitzel and sauerbraten (both made with the fruity and dry red blend named Hermannsburger), as well as locally made wurst. You can go red or white with this one, but I suggest Stone Hill's Norton, a rich and full-bodied red that's made from a grape almost unknown outside the Missouri wine industry. In fact, Stone Hill's Norton is one of my favorite reds in the world.

Those amazing little German dumplings called spaetzle come with chicken or vegetables. I'd suggest their complex, fruity Chardonnay with the former (since the dish is made with Chardonnay, let's continue the experience), and perhaps a citrusy, spicy Traminette with the latter. Dessert? You can stick with the German theme with a Black Forest Cake, though I can never resist the perfectly described Decadent Warm Molten Chocolate Cake. Pair either one with their Port (made from Norton), which uses this unique grape to produce an unusual and winning dessert wine. Stone Hill has long been one of Hermann's best-known wineries, and I would recommend really getting to know the place, combining your wonderful food and wine experience with a tour of the property. Give yourself plenty of time to marvel at the lovely setting. 1110 Stone Hill Highway, Hermann MO. Tel: 573-486-3479. www.stonehillwinery.com.

**PAGE SPRINGS CELLARS
CORNVILLE, ARIZONA**

As you look out over Page Springs' vineyards from the sunny patio, you know you're in for a very special food and wine experience. Their menu is extensive, appealing, and beautifully presented: smoked salmon rilette, for instance, offers the luscious salmon spread surrounded by a vast assortment of accompaniments: onions, capers, focaccia and lavash to spread it on, grapes, almonds, figs, dried apricots (did I forget anything)? Shishito peppers are perfectly roasted, some spicier than others (which is the way with shishitos), accompanied by garlic aioli. Pizzas are wood-fired and range from a simple Margherita to a wonderful mushroom/pesto with truffled goat cheese. Spinach and artichoke hearts are baked in a parmesan cream sauce with a hint of green chiles, and the burrata salad is as wonderful as burrata always is, served with "bacon dust" and roasted tomatoes. Then there are the wines: opened in 2004, Page Springs really gave a kickstart to the Arizona wine industry, and their wines show why. My mixed white/red flight begins with Malvasia Bianca (a popular grape here), and as my server Deanna predicts, it's "floral and aromatic but with a dry finish." From here I move on to La Flor Rosa, a rosé that's a combination of several grapes, resulting in a dry wine that's enough to restore my faith in rosé. Then a light but flavorful Mourvèdre (the word that comes to mind is "drinkable"), then a 2019 ECIPS. If you wonder about the name, it's "spice" spelled back-



Two Sisters Vineyards

Photo courtesy of Two Sisters

ward, and this wine, only made in cooler years, is an intriguing mix of Counoise and Grenache, with touches of Syrah and Mourvèdre, and you can see where it got its name, with peppery and, yes, spicy, flavors. I love their 100% Syrah, which has a lightness I don't usually associate with Syrah, which combines perfectly with the full-bodied, smooth quality of the grape. A flourless chocolate torte (topped with wine-infused strawberries, of course) is the perfect accompaniment to this bold red; the perfect end to a perfect experience. 1500 N. Page Springs Rd., Cornville AZ. Tel: 928-639-3004. www.pagespringscellars.com.

**TWO SISTERS VINEYARDS
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONTARIO**

For my money, Two Sisters Vineyards is the nicest winery in the Niagara Wine Region.

The Marotta family hails from Italy, and this background is reflected in the Italian tilt to the menu at their Kitchen 76 trattoria. While the winery is luxurious and large in feel, like a Tuscan villa somehow popping up in the middle of eastern Canada, it's still family-run, and you're likely to find one of the eponymous two sisters onsite, as they've always had a hands-on approach, from construction of the building to planting the vines (though of course they have a knowledgeable staff in place to assist visitors).

Set on 76 acres of a former peach orchard (see where the restaurant's name comes from?), the winery also boasts one of the best restaurants in the area. Sit on the stately patio overlooking the vineyards while you enjoy housemade focaccia, Arancini (Sicilian rice balls) with smoked mozzarella, tomato sauce, and basil), followed by an amazing Truffle Pizza with mascarpone/truffle sauce, oyster and shiitake mushrooms, and arugula, or perhaps a perfect Risotto Trevisano, made with their own Eleventh Post wine, radicchio, and Parmigiano. The food is remarkable, and it's accompanied of course by some of their equally remarkable wines. This is a winery, after all, and their philosophy is that everything about the place, even their great cuisine, is ultimately in service of the wines. Their aptly-named Lush sparkling wine, a mix of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, dosaged with a touch of Cabernet Franc, is rich and more full-bodied than most sparkling wines, and the perfect opener. Chardonnay (from the oldest Chardonnay vines in Canada) is perfect with the pizza or risotto, and you might want to compare the version aged in French oak to the unoaked one, which first opened my eyes to the beautiful minerality of a wine



Page Spring Cellars

Photo courtesy of Page Spring Cellars

without the oakiness. Eleventh Post is even better in a glass than as an ingredient: an earthy, complex, and many-layered treat. This region is famous for ice wine, so you'll definitely want to end your meal with a glass of this sweet fire. Whether you do the Riesling or Cabernet Sauvignon is up to you. I'll just say that both of them are incredibly delicious, but then, that could apply to all the food and wine at this remarkable place. *240 John St. E., Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Tel: 905-468-0592. www.twosistersvineyards.com.*

RD WINERY NAPA, CALIFORNIA

RD Winery is surprising in so many ways that I can hardly list them. The first Vietnamese-owned Napa winery, it's not some luscious estate in the middle of acres of grapevines. It's a no-nonsense, almost industrial cluster of buildings just off the freeway, but when you step into the tasting room, you're in an entirely different world of elegance, gorgeous art, friendly staff, and of course great food and wine. You might choose instead to take a seat on the roomy patio overlooking the rose garden and the winery itself. Whichever you select, prepare for a treat. It's the first winery I've encountered where wine is paired with Asian food, and the results couldn't be more appealing. I've booked a Five Moons flight (based on this wine line that's made from grapes grown all over California), and when I arrive, I'm seated by the ultra-friendly staff at a table with five wine glasses preset. Soon my gracious hostess, Kandace, arrives to pour five lovely wines and moments later brings over a long rectangular plate with my five-course sampling menu. (You can also order a la carte, or just get a glass, but I suggest this flight, or the Hundred Knot, their higher-

end line sourced only in Napa and Sonoma counties.) My plate of culinary delights is lined up left to right, each dish in front of its matching wine (though they encourage you to also mix-n-match as you please). Green curry dusted popcorn pairs beautifully with Grüner Veltliner, while a light and sparkly Malvasia Bianca is the perfect match for shrimp with a tangy kimchi cocktail sauce. (This also goes great with the Grüner, as I discover when following their advice to create my own pairings!) Their Chenin Blanc is perhaps my favorite, and its beautiful straw color hints at the fruity flavor that aligns to perfection with the Veggie Spring Roll, wrapped in rice paper and livened by tamarind/sweet chili sauce. Seasonal soup shooters are a winner: when I'm there, it's a carrot and coconut milk soup, redolent with lemongrass, ginger, and red curry paste, the ideal match for their El Dorado Rosé, a blend of (mainly) Grenache with Mourvèdre and Cinsault. The final course is a pulled pork slider (as I'm not a pork lover, the chef does mine with chicken, with pea shoot slaw and wasabi aioli). RD's Zinfandel matches up with this one and makes for the consummate climax to the meal. This is a Napa must-visit, welcoming and beautiful, with uniquely pleasing wines and gourmet pleasures. *3 Executive Way, Napa CA. Tel: 707-259-9446. www.rdwinery.com.*

VALDEMAR ESTATES WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

The Walla Walla region of Washington State is gaining fame as a wine-producing area, and one of the most interesting wineries is Valdemar Estates, open since 2019. With



Valdemar Estates

five generations of winemaking under their belt, you know this Spanish family is going to produce some great varietals, and the tapas menu served at the winery complements the wines, reflecting in even more depth the Spanish origins. You can do a three-wine tasting flight from their own vineyard, or from their sister winery in Rioja, Spain (or designate a driver, live dangerously, and try both!). I suggest the Valdemar Estates selections, starting with "French Creek" Chardonnay before moving on to two reds: their "Klipsun" Syrah, a rich, complex wine with just a hint of Grenache, and "Walla Walla" Cabernet Sauvignon, bright and bold. Accompany it with some Spanish-flavored bites from their extensive tapas menu. You might start with a Tortilla de Patatas, the famous Spanish potato omelette, livened here by sriracha aioli, or perhaps some chorizo-stuffed mushrooms. Continue with anything from Jamón Ibérico (that most succulent of cured meats), octopus served Galician-style with olive oil and smoked paprika, or even an olive oil and sherry vinegar tasting that offers you a selection (with a demi-baguette) as wide-ranging as your wines. Among the larger "raciones" plates, standouts include Pomegranate Salad with mixed greens, goat cheese, and walnuts, and Roasted Cauliflower Gratin, with a luscious romesco, Manchego cheese, toasted pumpkin seeds, and cilantro vinaigrette. Or, if you're in the mood for something heartier, Lamb Meatballs, livened by pimento sauce and served over saffron rice. Have you taken a detour and ended up in Spain? You'd be forgiven for thinking so! *3808 Rolling Hills Lane, Walla Walla WA. Tel: 509-956-4926. www.valdemarestates.com.*



RD Winery

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