

Bay Area

## Stags Leap District celebrates 30 years in Vineyard to Vintner weekend



*Stags Leap District celebrates their 30th Anniversary Weekend at Vineyard to Vintner, hosted at Stags' Leap Winery with renowned wines and an extraordinary luncheon. Photo: Bob McClenahan*

Wine enthusiasts from near and far gathered on the eastern edge of Napa Valley for Stags Leap District's 30th Anniversary Weekend. Their annual Vineyard to Vintner, three-day event, held last weekend, (April 26-28) gave guests rare opportunities to dig deep into this legendary appellation's distinct wines.

"The history of Stags Leap District is truly remarkable. The past 30 years have ushered in changes in the vineyard, our wineries and our region," said Allison Steltzner, Managing Partner at Steltzner Vineyards and Board Member of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association. "I know one thing has stayed consistent the focus on crafting incredible Cabernet Sauvignon. This past weekend gave us the chance to celebrate and show gratitude to the visionaries still with us and remember all the individuals who made our region what it is today."

The gorgeous spring weather and unique, hands-on experiences made it a memorable weekend. We savored rare library selections, enjoyed multi-course meals catered by local greats (including Chef Ken Frank) and learned about the region from seasoned winemakers. Guests also had access to wineries that aren't usually open to the public.

"Vineyard to Vintner is our premier event, showcasing all the region has to offer," said Remi Cohen, chief operating officer at Lede Family Wines. "As president of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association, I was honored to welcome guests for the weekend. Each of the wineries in the District is unique but connected through a shared passion for the highest-quality winemaking."

### **Library Wine Dinners**

The event kicked off Friday with vintner dinners and tastings hosted by Cliff Lede Vineyards, Clos Du Val, Odette Estate Winery, Quixote Winery and Taylor Family Vineyards.

This year, I enjoyed the dinner at Cliff Lede Vineyards, which featured selections from Silverado Vineyards, Stags' Leap Winery and, of course, Cliff Lede. We began with an alfresco toast and delicious hors d'oeuvres on the winery's veranda, which offers stunning Stags Leap District Palisades views.

We were then ushered into the dramatic tank room for cuisine by Michelin Star Chef Ken Frank, of Napa's La Toque restaurant, accompanied by rare Stags Leap District wines.

"I am always excited to imagine a menu around a set of wines, especially wines with a little age and complexity," said Frank. "The 1989 was particularly satisfying because it commemorated 30 years of the appellation. But it was also a delicious wine that lent itself to creative pairing opportunities. When wines age well, and this one was a stunning example, the complexities are totally worth the wait. The trio of 2006 Stags Leap District wines, side by side, was another good example of the benefits of careful cellaring."

In the intimate tank room, new friends were made and palates excited.

"Gathering around the table to toast 30 years was the perfect welcome to this year's milestone 30th Anniversary at Vineyard to Vintner weekend," said Cohen. "It was a night to remember, with an abundance of beautiful Stags Leap District wines paired with superb food from some of Napa Valley's renowned chefs. Our guests were truly able to get a taste of our history, with many vintners sharing some coveted library selections dating back decades."

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### Vineyard Walks, Seminars and Tastings

Saturday began with the Digging Deeper experience, an in-depth series of immersive seminars that explored Stags Leaps history, terroir and the people behind the wines.

Attendees could select one of five unique sessions hosted by an area winery. These intimate seminars gave guests the chance explore the area's geology, climate and soils, as well as meeting winemakers, vineyard managers and viticulturists. Participating wineries included: Chimney Rock Winery, Pine Ridge Vineyards, Regusci Winery, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Steltzner Vineyards.

"The vineyards, and particularly the soils, here in the Stags Leap District are really what makes this growing region so distinct. This year's "Digging Deeper" seminars invited guests behind the scenes in the wineries and vineyards to get much richer understanding of all that makes the wines unique, said Michael Beaulac, Winemaker at Pine Ridge and Board Member of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association.



### Luncheon at Stags' Leap Winery

The bright sun on Saturday afternoon was everyone's cue to gather for the 30th Anniversary Luncheon. Or rather, it was the pop of a champagne bottle that sent out the call.

"The winemaking artistry and longevity of the Stags Leap District was very present at the 30th Anniversary luncheon held at Stags' Leap Winery this past Saturday," said Christophe Paubert, Winemaker at Stags' Leap Winery. "My fellow winemaking colleagues and I are always honored to be together for a celebration of this magnitude, especially representing the best of the best from the Stags Leap District, so this was a very special occasion for us. We look forward to another 30 years of continued exquisite wines from the Stags Leap District's amazing winemaking community!"

Rarely are all the Stags Leap District vintners gathered in one place for a celebratory anniversary toast. Under the palisades at Stags' Leap Winery, guests enjoyed live jazz music by the Jack Rozz Band, and strolling garden lunch with vintners as they showcased 30 years of extraordinary wines.



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### Savoring Stags Leap District

Sunday offered everyone an entire day to indulge in all the wine tasting they desired. This year, guests spent Sunday sampling 12 of the area's wineries, tasting rooms and food venues.

Attendee's visited Baldacci Family Vineyards; Chimney Rock Winery; Cliff Lede; Clos du Val; Lindstrom Wines; Malk Family Vineyards; Pine Ridge Vineyards; Quixote; Silverado Vineyards; Stag's Leap Wine Cellars; Stags' Leap Winery; and Steltzner Vineyards. Hang onto this list so you can check out these Stags Leap tasting rooms the next time you visit Napa Valley.

### Wining, Dining and Donating

To honor the 30th anniversary, Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association donated \$50 from each ticket to the University of California at Davis Nathan Fay Graduate Fellowship Fund. This scholarship is presented each year to a worthy School of Enology and Viticulture graduate student. The organization wants to support future winemakers, whether through charitable contributions or educational events.

The Stags Leap Districts 30th Anniversary Weekend was an amazing time, renewing my appreciation of Napa. That it also supported a worthy cause was just icing on the cake.