

Bay Area

Celebrate 30 Years of the Stags Leap District at their Annual Vineyard to Vintner Weekend in April



Stags Leap District Vineyard to Vintner Event. Photo: Bob McClenahan Photography

Marking 30 years since the founding of the American Viticultural Area (AVA), the Stags Leap District Winegrowers is hosting its 30th Anniversary Celebration weekend affair, to be held Friday through Sunday, April 26 to 28, 2019. Rare library selections, decadent meals, in-depth education and exclusive vintner access will be the highlight as wine enthusiasts explore the region with the winemakers and principals who craft the wines from vineyard to bottle.

We caught up with Chief Operating Officer of Lede Family Wines, President of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association, Remi Cohen, to learn more about what makes the Stags Leap

District so distinct and iconic.

Q. Travel Writer, Jennifer Boden: Congrats on the 30th Anniversary. When was the AVA founded?

A. Remi Cohen:

The District is celebrated for its world-renowned Cabernet Sauvignon and was recognized as a formal AVA in 1989. There's a deep history of winegrowing here dating back to the 1800s, though it was in the 1960s that the region began gaining recognition. Bordered by the Vaca Mountains on the East and the Napa River on the West, the District was the first in the United States to be approved based on the distinctiveness of its coarse volcanic soils.



Scenes from Previous Stags Leap District Vineyard to Vintner Event. Photos: Bob McClenahan Photography

Q. Who founded the Stags Leap District AVA

A. Remi Cohen:

The true hero of the Stags Leap District is Nathan Fay, who planted the first Cabernet Sauvignon in the region in 1961. At the time, Cabernet wasn't commonly planted in the United States, but he was inspired by great French wines and wasn't dissuaded by conventional opinion of the time that the region wasn't suited to cabernet. In 1976, a Cabernet Sauvignon made from Stags Leap

District grapes took first place at the historic Judgement of Paris tasting, catapulting the region onto the global stage. Nathan was a mentor and guide to many winemakers and growers, and his influence is still felt today. In the mid-1980s it was John Shafer who rallied neighbors and spearheaded the efforts for the petition required to gain formal designation.

Q. What is your involvement with the 30th Anniversary Weekend at Vineyard to Vintner?

A. Remi Cohen:

Vineyard to Vintner is our premier event showcasing all the region has to offer, and as President of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association, I'm honored to be able to welcome our guests for the weekend. Each of the wineries here in the District is unique, but connected through a shared passion for highest-quality winemaking. I'm proud to be an ambassador for the region. Cliff Lede Vineyards will also co-host an intimate dinner at our estate on the opening night, along with Silverado Vineyards and Stags' Leap Winery. We're teaming up with Michelin-starred chef Kenneth Frank – it's going to be an amazing evening.



Cliff Lede Vineyards. Top Right: Remi Cohen.

Q. What makes this weekend different than past Vineyard to Vintner events?

A. Remi Cohen:

We've pulled out all the stops for our 30th Anniversary weekend. For Cabernet aficionados, this is an unparalleled opportunity to explore one of the famed grape growing regions in the world. Every aspect is elevated; we're celebrating with decades-old library wines, elegant dinners, and access to wineries that aren't typically open to the public. Brand new this year is "Digging Deeper," an in-depth series of immersive seminars that explore our history, terroir, and the people behind our wines.



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Is there a charitable component to the 30th Anniversary Weekend?

A. Remi Cohen:

Stags Leap District Winegrowers established an endowment fund in 2000 to support the next generation of winegrowers. The Nathan Fay Graduate Fellowship at the University of California at Davis pays tribute to District pioneer Nathan Fay. In honor of our 30th anniversary, \$50 from each ticket will be donated to the coveted scholarship, which is awarded each year to one graduate student in the School of Enology and Viticulture.

Q. Tell us about the weekend's events.

A. Remi Cohen:

From Friday, April 26 to Sunday, April 28, the 30th Anniversary Weekend at Vineyard to Vintner offers unprecedented access to Stags Leap District wines and personalities. The weekend begins with an unforgettable evening of exceptional wines and chef-driven menus celebrating three decades of winemaking excellence. On Saturday, the Digging Deeper seminars provide context and lead to a greater appreciation of the region. Next, the 30th Anniversary Luncheon offers an opportunity to meet the winemakers, principals and owners of 17 District wineries in one location, as well as a sneak peek tasting of the 2016 Stags Leap District Appellation Collection, to be released in October 2019. Finally, the weekend concludes with Savor SLD, a day of tastings from among twelve SLD properties. For any Cabernet fan, it's a weekend that will be remembered!

A. What is your favorite part about this weekend every year?

Q. Remi Cohen:

By far my favorite part of Vineyard to Vintner weekend is meeting guests from all over the globe, sharing stories, trying amazing wines, and making memories together. It's rare to have the chance to experience an entire region – that's what makes this celebration stand out.



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