

Stags Leap District V2V gives access to rarely open wineries

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Photos by Anne Ward Ernst/Weekly Calistogan

Tom Jinks pours tastes of his family's Robinson Family Vineyards cabernet sauvignon during Stags Leap District's Vineyard to Vintner.

An invitation to visit the private homes of some owners and winemakers provided a unique, personal experience during the annual Stags Leap District Vineyard to Vintner event this past weekend.

Some attendees plan vacations around the weekend and have become friends with owners, Tom Jinks, of Robinson Family Vineyards. Wineries such as Robinson, Malk Family and Taylor Family Vineyards aren't open for public tastings except during Vineyard to Vintner (V2V).

Some 19 Stags Leap District wineries, including better-known wineries such as Pine Ridge, Regusci, Clos du Val, Chimney Rock and others, participated in V2V with hosted winemaker dinners on Friday night, open houses on Saturday and Sunday, and a lively Meadowood Res catered brunch with live music and an appellation tasting on Sunday at Silverado Vineyards.

At Robinson Family Vineyards, Jinks' friends fired up the outdoor wood pizza oven serving hot fresh thin-crust pizzas, and pouring samples of such wines as Robinson Family Vineyards 20 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, 2012 Estate Merlot, and the 2012 Two+Three Proprietary Red Wine made of mostly cabernet sauvignon, with a bit of merlot, cabernet franc and drops of Malbec and petite verdot. They also served their playful-label Great Legs 2012 Cabernet Franc.

Jinks retired from the construction business to work full time in the vineyard and winery, and his wife, Susie Robinson-Jinks, whose parents first bought the 78-acre property, retired from a career in real estate to help oversee the family business. They are assisted by their three daughters, who inspired the Great Legs label.

Jinks said he makes their wine to his palate because, "if I can't sell it I've got to drink it."

Down the road apiece from Robinson, Malk Family Vineyards had a 2014 pinot noir from a F Ross-Seaview vineyard, a 2011 and a 2012 cabernet sauvignon from the Stags Leap District, their 2014 sauvignon blanc. They opened up their deck to visitors to enjoy the sweeping vall and mountain views while serving barbecue tri-tip and Moroccan-spice tri-tip along with oth nibbles.

Silverado Vineyards' neighbor Taylor Family Vineyards was an oft-recommended taste by otl V2V guests. The large shaded deck of the family's home offered an area to sit, relax and stay awhile sipping their sauvignon blanc, chardonnay and a couple of 2012 cabernet sauvignons: one from Stags Leap District and the other from the Diamond Mountain area in Calistoga.

Stags' Leap Wine Cellars celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Judgment of Paris tasting at which the winery's 1973 S.L.V. Cabernet Sauvignon took top honors among the red wines. Guests were invited to guess the vintage in their own "blind tasting" on the shore of the esta pond.

The annual event also offered a sneak taste of the 2013 Appellation Collection that will be released Oct. 15 this year that includes 20 Stags Leap District designated cabernet sauvigno signed by vintners and offered exclusively to V2V guests.

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