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WINE COUNTRY

TASTING ROOMS **462**

Best of the best in Napa

By Sarah Fritsche
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Napa Valley is home to hundreds of wineries, a land of plenty for wine lovers. The city of Napa itself hosts both estate wineries and a growing number of downtown tasting rooms. Here are our top picks for Napa tasting rooms, earning at least 2½ out of a possible four stars:

Artesa Vineyards & Winery

★★★

Artesa's contemporary structure and views of the Carneros hills and the bay are impressive. Specializing in premium Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, Artesa serves four wines in a classic tasting flight (\$10); five reserve wines are \$15. Guided tours, which include the reserve tasting, are \$20 (daily at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.) 1345 Henry Road (Dealy Lane turnoff from Old Sonoma Road), Napa; (707) 224-1668 or artesa.winery.com; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, last tasting at 4:30 p.m.; reservations required for groups of eight or more.

Baldacci Family Vineyards

★★½

Owners Tom and Brenda Baldacci purchased their Stags Leap District vineyard property in 1997 and began making their own estate wines in 2000. The wines are named after family members, including Brenda's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon and the IV Sons label, the latter a nod to the couple's four children. Sample three wines for \$10 (refundable with purchase) or six to seven reserve wines (\$25). 6236 Silverado Trail, Napa; (707) 944-9261 or baldaccivineyards.com; by appointment, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily.

Bouchaine Vineyards

★★½

Bouchaine, specializing in Pinot Noir and

Chardonnay, was established in 1981 on the site of the oldest continuously operating winery in Carneros. A tasting of five wines is \$15-\$20. For \$30, taste five wines, along with cheese and olives, on the veranda. The winery also offers a picnic lunch for two (\$95; reservations required). 1075 Buchli Station Road (near Las Amigas Road), Napa; (800) 654-9463 or bouchaine.com; 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. daily; reservations required for groups of eight or more.

Chimney Rock Winery

★★★½

Located at the heart of the Stags Leap District, Chimney Rock is known for its Cabernet Sauvignons and Elevage blends. The Cape Dutch-style building is reminiscent of South Africa's oldest winery, Groot Constantia, founded in 1685. A Summer Trio of two whites and one rosé is \$10; other tastings are \$20-\$30. Private tours and additional specialty tastings are available by prior appointment. 5350 Silverado Trail, Napa; (800) 257-2641 or chimneyrock.com; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

Clos du Val

★★½

The winery's 1972 Cabernet Sauvignon was one of only six California Cabernets in the famed 1976 Paris Tasting. Tastings are \$10-\$20. Picnic areas are located in the winery's olive grove (reservations advised; \$10 reservation fee per person). Tours of the winery and a demonstration vineyard can be reserved a day ahead. 5330 Silverado Trail, Napa; (707) 261-5200 or closduval.com; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

Cuvaison

★★★

Winemaker Steve Rogstad produces a range of wines from the winery's 400-acre Carneros estate — certified



Brant Ward / The Chronicle

John Ross pours at Uncorked at Oxbow, where you can try four Ahnfeldt and Carducci wines for \$10.

Napa Green in 2008 — and 140-acre Mount Veeder estate. A four-pour tasting is \$15. Cuvaison also has a second tasting room in Calistoga. 1221 Duhig Road, Napa; (707) 942-2455 or cuvaison.com; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

Darioush Winery

★★½

Raised in the Iranian winegrowing region of Shiraz, Darioush Khaledi came to the United States and founded his eponymous winery in 1997. The winery's architecture evokes the ancient Persian capital Persepolis. A tasting of five wines is \$25; a \$50 tour and tasting pairs estate wines with Cowgirl Creamery cheeses (by appointment, 2 p.m. daily). 4240 Silverado Trail, Napa; (707) 257-2345 or darioush.com; 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

Domaine Carneros

★★★

Founded by Champagne Taittinger in 1987, Domaine Carneros is known for its sparkling wines. Its chateau is modeled after the Chateau de la Marquetterie in Champagne. Restaurant-style table service is available, with wines available in flights, by the glass and by the bottle. Caviar and artisan cheeses are also available for pairing. A tour and tasting is offered daily at 11 a.m., 1 and 3 p.m. (\$25; reservations recommended). 1240 Duhig Road (off Highway 121),

Napa; (800) 716-2788 or domainecarneros.com; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily.

Hagafen Cellars

★★½

Owner Ernie Weir and his wife, Irit, have been making kosher wines since 1979 under the Hagafen, Don Ernesto and Prix labels. Sample five regular wines, including a Lake County White Riesling, for \$5, or five reserve wines for \$10 in a tasting room best suited for small groups. Tours are offered at 11 a.m. daily except Saturday. 4160 Silverado Trail, Napa; (888) 424-2336 or hagafen.com; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

The Hess Collection

★★½

Art and wine intersect at Donald Hess' winery, which features contemporary art from his private collection. A tasting of four current releases is \$10. A guided museum tour and pairing of three wines with bites from executive chef Chad Hendrickson is \$35-\$40 (10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Thursday-Saturday; by reservation). 4411 Redwood Road, Napa; (707) 255-1144 or hesscollection.com; 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily; museum hours: 10 a.m.-5:15 p.m. daily (self-guided iPod audio tours available).

Mason Cellars

★★★

Mason is best known for Sauvignon Blanc, including the popular

Pomelo label. The cheerful tasting room is located in downtown Napa's Oxbow District. Current release tastings are free. Wines are also sold by the glass. 714 First St. (at McKinstry), Napa; (707) 255-0658 or masoncellars.com; 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Thursday-Monday; reservations requested for groups of eight or more.

The Michael Mondavi Family Taste Gallery and Winery

★★★

Formerly known as Folio Winemaker's Studio, the space changed its name to reflect the focus on wines solely produced by the Michael Mondavi family. A flight of six wines is \$10; six reserve wines is \$20. The gallery also hosts "First Friday" monthly art openings showcasing local talent, with educational programs and food and wine pairings. 1285 Dealy Lane (near Henry Road), Napa; (707) 256-2757 or folio.wine.com; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.

Paraduxx

★★★

This offshoot of Duckhorn Vineyards specializes in reds, particularly Zinfandel-Cabernet blends. Tastings (\$20-\$30) feature stemless Riedel glassware, handy coasters with tasting notes and vintage information on the back, as well as cheese and crackers. Tastings range from \$20 to \$30. 7257 Silverado Trail (near Yountville Cross), Napa; (707) 945-0890 or (866) 367-9943 or paraduxx.com; 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily; until 4 p.m. November-Memorial Day; reservations required for groups of six or more.

Pine Ridge Winery

★★★

four wines is \$20, with a tour, \$25. 6126 Silverado Trail, Napa; (707) 944-2659 or quixotewinery.com; by appointment only, Tuesday-Sunday at 10 a.m., noon, 2 and 4 p.m.

Robert Sinskey Vineyards

★★½

This Stags Leap District estate is run by vintner Rob Sinskey and his wife, culinary director and professional chef Maria Helm Sinskey. A four-pour tasting is \$25, partially refundable with purchase; a farm-to-table tour pairs wines with food and includes a tour of the garden and wine caves is \$50 (11 a.m. daily; reservations required). All wines are certified organic and biodynamic. 6320 Silverado Trail (just south of Yountville Cross Road), Napa; (800) 869-2030 or robertsinskey.com; 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily.

Silenus Vintners

★★★½

This co-op tasting room/custom crush winery showcases 10 boutique wineries — B Cellars, Due Vigne di Famiglia, Gridley Family Cellars, Ideology Cellars, Maple Lane, Mario Bazan Cellars, Matthiasson, Poem Cellars, Ramian Estate and Venge Vineyards. All wines poured are made on-site. Six-pour tasting flights are \$15-\$25, with offerings changing weekly. 5225 Solano Ave. (at Darms Lane), Napa; (707) 299-3930 or silenusvintners.com; by appointment, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily.

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars

★★★

Founder Warren Winiarski's 1973 S.L.V. Cabernet beat four top-

0890 or (866) 367-9943 or paraduxx.com; 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily; until 4 p.m. November-Memorial Day; reservations required for groups of six or more.

Pine Ridge Winery

★★★

Pine Ridge produces Cabernet, Bordeaux-style blends and Chardonnay. A four-pour red and wine tasting is \$15; a four-pour Cabernet flight is \$25. Tours lead guests from a demonstration vineyard to wine production facilities, concluding with a wine and cheese pairing in the wine caves (\$25; 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m.; reservations required; 10 people maximum; children not permitted). 5901 Silverado Trail (1 mile south of Yountville Cross Road), Napa; (800) 575-9777 or pineridgewinery.com; 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily.

Quixote Winery

★★★

Friedensreich Hundertwasser designed the quirky and architecturally dazzling Quixote Winery with no straight lines and loads of color. Winery owner Carl Doumani, a colorful character himself (see "A Glass With" elsewhere in this section), kept 27 acres in his 1997 sale of Stags Leap Ranch and established the Quixote and Panza labels. Red wines rule, in particular Petite Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. A tasting of

3930 or sileneusvintners.com; by appointment, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily.

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars

★★★

3.5
Founder Warren Winiarski's 1973 S.L.V. Cabernet beat four top-ranked Bordeaux at the 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting. A tasting of two whites and two reds is \$15; a \$30 tasting features wines from the Fay and S.L.V. estate vineyards, including the rare Cask 23. Estate and wine cave tours are by appointment and include a tasting of estate wines (\$40). 5766 Silverado Trail (north of Oak Knoll), Napa; (866) 422-7523 or cask23.com; 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily; reservations required for groups of six or more.

Trefethen Vineyards

★★½

Signature wines offered at the 1886 tasting room generally include a dry Riesling, Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. A tasting of four estate-grown wines is \$10; five limited releases is \$25. Winery tours and tastings are offered daily at 10:30 a.m. by reservation for \$25; a twilight tour and tasting, with artisan cheeses and charcuterie is \$100 by reservation. 1160 Oak Knoll Ave., Napa; (707) 255-7700 or (866) 895-7696 or trefethen.com; 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily.

Tasting continues on K6

The best of Napa's best for tastings

Tasting from page K2

New on the scene

Carpe Diem Wine Bar

Local and imported wines are served with artisan cheeses, brick oven flatbreads and other wine-friendly bites. 1001 2nd St., Napa; (707) 224-0800 or carpediemwinebar.com; 4-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, until 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday.

John Anthony Vineyards

During the day, the tasting room offers traditional wine flights (\$15-\$20). At night, the space takes on a lounge atmosphere, complete with salumi, cheese, wines by the glass and bottle service. 1440 First St., Napa; (707) 265-7711 or jawnwine.com; 10 a.m.-2 a.m. daily.

Toolbox Wine Co.

The tasting room shares the space with boutique Gustavo Thrace winery. A tasting of five Toolbox wines and four Gustavo Thrace wines is \$10. 1021 McKinstry St., Napa; (707) 257-6796 or toolboxwineco.com; open daily.

Trahan Winery & Olabisi Winery Tasting Room

Guests can sample three wines from each winery for \$15. 974 Franklin St., Napa; (707) 257-7477 or olabisiwineries.com and trahanwinery.com; open daily.

Uncorked at Oxbow

A tasting of four wines from Ahnfeldt Wines and Carducci Wines is \$10. A barrel tasting and blending session is \$45, which include a tasting of eight wines. 605 First St., Napa; (707) 927-5864 or uncorked-at-oxbow.com; open daily.

Kenzo Estate

Video game pioneer Kenzo Tsujimoto purchased this Mount George property in 1990 and went all out, hiring renowned winemaker Heidi Peterson Barrett and viticulturist David Abreu. A 1-ounce, four-pour tasting is \$30; 2-ounce pours are \$50; food pairings from Bouchon are a la carte. A wine-paired lunch is \$60. 3200 Monticello Road, Napa; (707) 254-7572 or kenzoestate.com; by appointment only, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily.



Kenzo Tsujimoto

Kim White/Bloomberg

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