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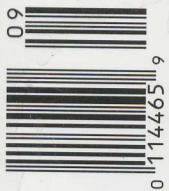
Tampa Bay

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Keith Martin Johns 2004

Meadowood



Napa Valley

By Aaron R. Fodiman
and Margaret Word Burnside

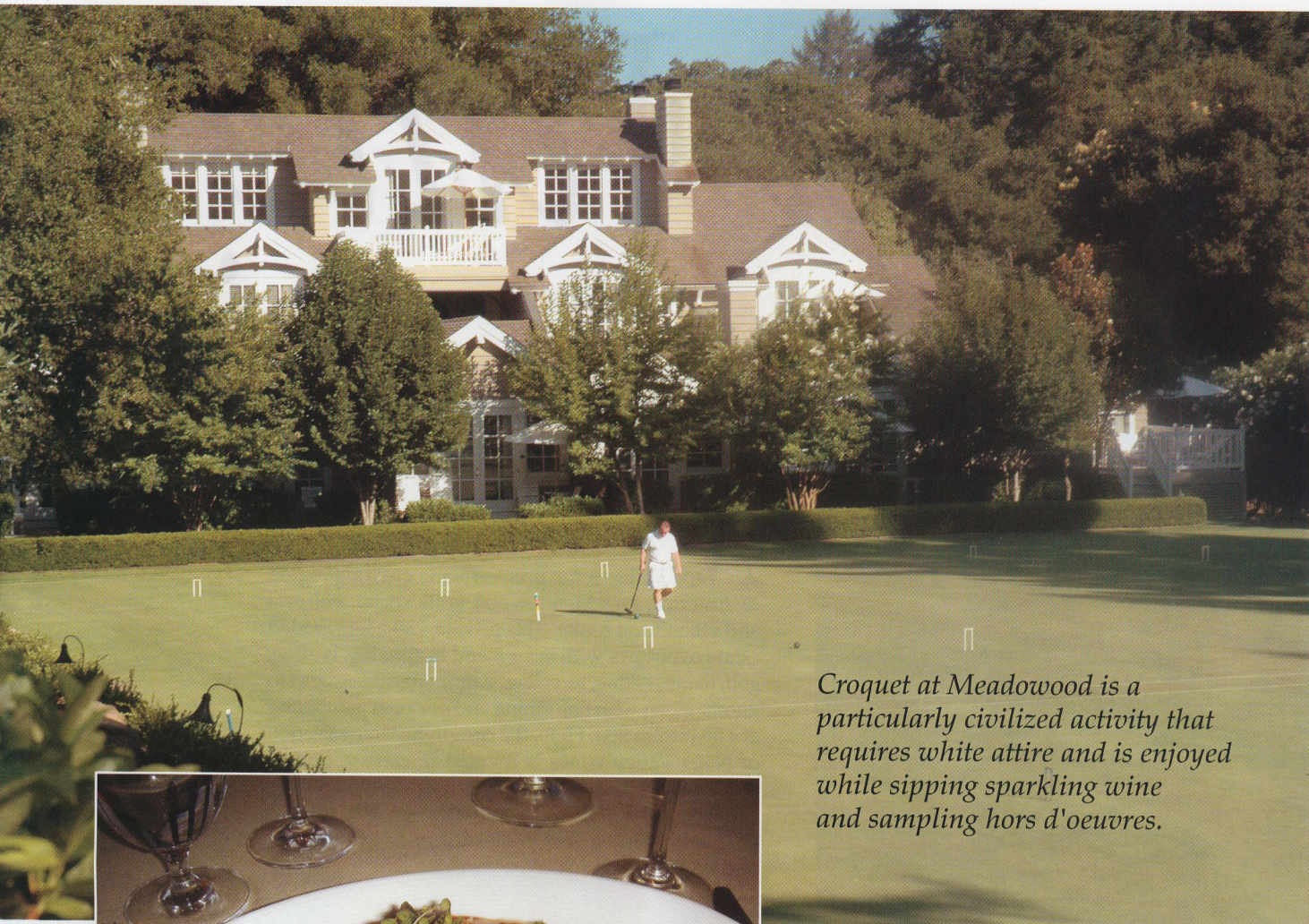
Photography by Noraa

Napa Valley is the premier wine growing region of America, and Meadowood is its social, cultural and viticultural center. This private, 250-acre wooded estate overflows with beauty and hospitality. It offers golf, tennis, hiking, bicycling, swimming and croquet to guests, along with fine dining and personal pampering at The Health Spa. Here, the comprehensive selection of Napa Valley wines is revered in classes, during daily tastings, and with fine cuisine. The area's rugged, natural beauty and the resort's unique ecosystem make a visit to Meadowood both relaxing and invigorating. ▶



*At Silverado Vineyard,
we enjoyed a private
tasting in the vineyards.*

*The simple enjoyment
of life's pleasures is a way
of life at Meadowood.*



Croquet at Meadowood is a particularly civilized activity that requires white attire and is enjoyed while sipping sparkling wine and sampling hors d'oeuvres.



At Meadowood, the food at both of their restaurants is exquisitely prepared and well matched with the largest selection of Napa Valley wines available anywhere.

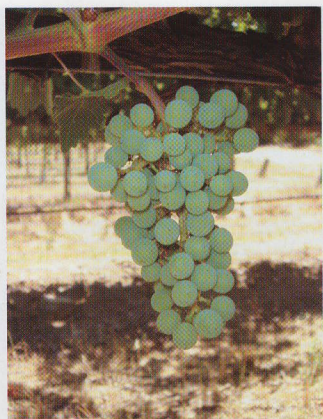
Perhaps one of Meadowood's most telling secrets is its croquet. This is a sport that can be enjoyed while sipping wine and snacking on hors d'oeuvres. It is a civilized game that is played here on full-sized lawns that are trimmed to less than a quarter of an inch and framed by rustic dry stacked stone walls. Croquet is a game of strategy that does not depend upon physical skills, so it gives the thinking player the advantage. Of course, white attire is required.

At The Health Spa, guests can enjoy the pure relaxation of a variety of massages, ranging from the traditional to a Valley stone version that uses both warm basalt stones and chilled, invigorating marble to bring harmony to your inner being. There are also body treatments, such as wraps, that begin with brisk dry-brush exfoliation, and after, the application of antioxidant body care lotion, bringing a new-found softness for your skin. They also offer facials that will hydrate and smooth the skin to help reduce fine lines and increase elasticity.

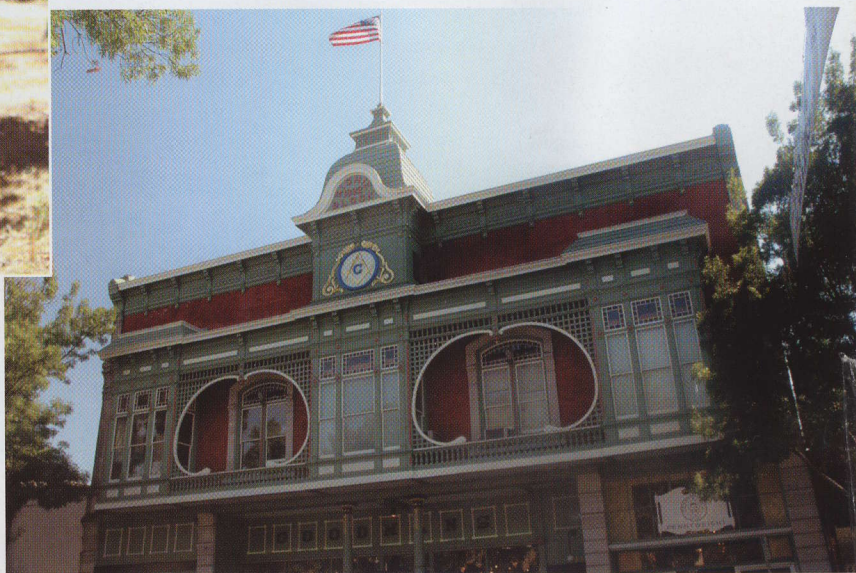
The Grill at Meadowood serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in a casual setting that overlooks the golf course. The ever changing menu selections feature fresh produce from the Napa area. The knowledgeable and hospitable servers make each dining experience memorable. The Restaurant at Meadowood serves a unique menu of gourmet delights, created by Chef Joseph Humphrey, that are presented on the menu with reference to their affinity for red or white wines as an accompaniment.

During our visit, we were fortunate to be able to attend the Ninth Annual Opera on the Lawn at Meadowood. After a sumptuous *al fresco* buffet, the Festival Opera performed Puccini's *Tosca* under a tent. Over 400 patrons of the arts enjoyed this fabulous evening of culture and culinary pleasures.

With 220 wineries in the Valley, we were only able to venture to a few that had been recommended for their quality and consistency. At Silverado Vineyards, wine education manager Greg Imbach drove us through the rows of grapes, as he explained the complex science of viticulture. We learned how to brix the grapes for sugar and lots of other interesting facts, such as that the Stags Leap District of the Valley, where Silverado is, was once the collapsed center of a volcano. We then sat in the shade of a 400-year-old tree on top of a hill overlooking the vineyard and the spectacular views of the Napa Valley. While there, we enjoyed a private tasting of their 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon, a full-bodied wine



In Napa, the grapes are "king," as you can't make an outstanding wine unless you begin with excellent grapes.



The town of St. Helena, where Meadowood is located, is filled with charming shops.



Woodhouse Chocolates lured us into their shop with this window display. Their chocolates are made by hand at the shop.

filled with the flavor of sweet fruit and oak with a long lingering finish, and their 2002 Solo-Stags Leap District Cabernet that had a velvety texture with a multitude of complex flavors. We also had the opportunity to taste their Limited 2002 Cabernet, which can only be harvested during special years, warranted by the grapes. The Limited had lively tannins that were well balanced with the stone fruit and oak flavors of this dark wine.

A short hop down the Silverado Trail brought us to the Baldacci Family Vineyards, where we sipped their estate-grown and bottled Cabernet Sauvignon that had been blended with a small amount of Cabernet Franc. The wines are cellared in their own man-made cave, after being fermented in small lots to extract the grapes' abundant fruit, character and structure.

Next, we ventured down the Silverado Trail to Dariosh, whose building was built in the style of a



The views of Napa Valley are lush and beautiful from every vantage point.

temple in the owners' native Persia. The wines there were as luxurious as the imported architecture.

We spent the following day with Chef Laura Douglas-Lee at Signorello Vineyards for a food and wine pairing that was different from any we had previously experienced. Chef Lee taught us how to balance the food with the wine by taking the five taste receptors of salt, sour, sweet, bitter and Umani. Yes, Umani was new to us too. You get a richness of flavor from it that is evident in ingredients such as ▶



The vineyards at Silverado produce wonderful Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Sangiovese, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon wines.



Chef Laura Douglas-Lee at Signorello Vineyards taught us new ways to meld food and wine.

aged cheese, red meat, shellfish and mushrooms. This tasting method was discovered by a Japanese scientist. The premise is that, if your food is too salty or acidic, it will make the wine taste weaker. Yet, if food is too sweet, bitter or full of Umani, it can make the wine taste much stronger. Therefore, the object of the cooking class was to teach us how to balance the salt and acid in the dish with the sweet, bitter and Umani. To do so, we first sipped the wine, so we could use that as our base line. Next, we tasted the food and then the wine again to see if its taste had been affected by the food. If we believed that the taste of the wine had changed due to being mixed with the food, we learned how to bring the dish into balance by adding another ingredient, so that it would not affect the wine. We added cream to a shrimp and corn salad to give it the balance needed for a 2003 Signorello Seta. We also found that by adding arugula to ratatouille, we could cut the acidity of the tomatoes to allow the 2004 Signorello Pinot Noir we were tasting to retain its full flavor without enhancement or dilution. It was a lesson that we have enjoyed experimenting with since our return home. The firm's winemaker Pierre Birebent, a Frenchman, spends much of his time in the vineyard. He uses old-world techniques, such as double sorting the grapes for optimum quality, as he believes that the quality of the grape is the most important aspect of the winemaking process.

Napa Valley Destinations

Meadowood

900 Meadowood Lane, St. Helena, CA
(707) 963-3646 • (800) 458-8080

Signorello Vineyards

4500 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA
(707) 255-5990 • (800) 982-4229

Silverado Vineyards

6121 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA
(707) 257-1770

Darioush

4240 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA
(707) 257-2345

Baldacci Family Vineyard

6236 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA
(707) 944-9261

Woodhouse Chocolate

1367 Main Street, St. Helena, CA
(800) 966-3468

GRAM



Dining on the lawn at Meadowood prior to a performance of the opera Tosca, performed under a tent, was one of our most memorable moments.



Darioush on the Silverado Trail has built this fabulous setting to expose their wines to the public.

From there, we visited the shops in St. Helena, a charming town that is only half a mile from Meadowood. There, we were captivated by the display window in Woodhouse Chocolates, a historic 1890s stone building. Inside, the shop resembles an 18th century Parisian salon. It is staffed with charming young women, who guided us through the variety of fine chocolates that are handmade on the premises. They create world-class gourmet chocolates that range from dark ganaches to fresh



The swimming pool at Meadowood is adjacent to their health spa, which offers effortless relaxation.

creams. Each piece is a work of art that should be eaten within seven days, since they don't contain any preservatives. We loved these exotic treats, that included Thai Ginger and Raspberry Chambord, as well as the more traditional selections.

Meadowood is the social, cultural and viticultural center of Napa Valley and is filled with simple pleasures that make its 250 wooded acres ideal for any type of getaway.