

# Wine Blog

*"Juicy Tales by Jo Diaz"*

## Magic Cellar Rendezvous ~ Celebrating Napa Valley's Stags Leap District ~ Part 2

### STAGS LEAP AVA

Another day to leave the office, and explore more of my wine world? When I got the invite to experience Napa Valley for an important weekend for so many specific vintners, I had to decide... Chained to my desk, or go exploring? People come from all over the world to discover Napa. How could I even question myself?

Well, there were two sides to be weighed here, both leading to something... And then I knew, a different perspective would open my windows for a bit more intake, let in something new and different. Adventure... I had to leave the desk and let the day evolve.

Off we went to Napa Valley on Saturday, April 30, 2016. Jose and I first collected our media badges at **Pine Ridge**. While Jose's great to immediately get involved in social media, I have to noodle it all around for a while. So he was done, day one. A couple of weeks later, here's my take on this lovely day.



## In The Beginning

For this first time at *Stags Leap District Annual Vineyard to Vintner*, we decided to visit places that have a long standing history worth exploring. Another year it could simply be the families which are small, and had opened their homes to visitors, while pouring their own wines. Another year could be returning to places where we had been in the past to see what's new. There's any number of configurations which would work. For this time, it was going to be satisfying our own curiosity of historic locations, and we were well rewarded: **Chimney Rock, Pine Ridge, Shafer Vineyards, and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars.**

### The Visit ~ Chimney Rock

Before being this entrenched in wine, a friend gave us a bottle of Chimney Rock Merlot. Our first, not our last. Meanwhile, step one was planted in our brain for why to visit Chimney Rock.

My next adventure was when I was working on a winery cat book, so I thought. I was chasing down *Marilyn Merlot* in the mid 1990s to take pictures of her. It was well worth the visit, while I stalked Marilyn's whereabouts. I found her in the back of the winery, on a stairwell's wall going up toward the azure blue sky. The curve, oooh, it made her look so important right on that wall. I was impressed. She sat still and stately, as I clicked away in the days of my SLR 35mms... photographing Winery Cats.

I also had a fantasy of Winery Dogs, and photographed a few as I went along to get cat shots. If I had been independently wealthy, I'd have that registered names and books; but, as fate would have it, a full time winery job opened up. I settled for a story in Coral Gables' *The Wine News*, "Cat O'Wine Tales" it was called. Marilyn's picture made the cut for inclusion. It was published in the 1995 June/July issue.

This time in 2016, I wasn't stalking cats, 20 years later. Jose and I straight away entered Chimney Rock's wine cellar with media passes, 20 years later and catching images as I went along.

A reception meet and greet by Assistant Winemaker **Laura Orozco** was followed by walking us through their wine cellar.. Intriguing. Red roses, such a feminine touch. Appetizers being served





to the guests. Meanwhile, Jose was whispering to me that he's known about Winemaker (and general manager) **Elizabeth Vianna**, for years. "Probably his Wine Spectrum Days," I thought to myself. During those days, Jose met some very impressive winemakers and tasted their wines, because he was telemarketing their gems and jewels. A great time for him, while I was traveling the states in sales and marketing. Jose was learning about who's who in winemaking, while I was learning about who's who in wholesaling. Processes...

I could tell Jose was gaga for Elizabeth. That meant that she must be someone I need to know, too. It was she, on this day, who invited us back for another visit. It's now written into the "someday soon" column. A woman who can direct wine and manage all winery operations? All I can do is nod my head and think "yes."

Elizabeth Vianna was eager to tell us about her history and wines, in a quick, passion-filled snapshot while we were tasting... The wines were delicious, well made, great balance, powerful messages in the bottle...

- Great grapes from Napa Valley.
- Terrific balance in the wines.
- Solid Structure in flavors and finish.

I knew why this was an important link that I should be making on this day.

A red carpet led us through the cellar experience... right over to... [Photo by Jose Diaz: Elizabeth Vianna and Jo]

### **Well Appointed Music**

As I was enjoying just "being" in the cellar, this image of guitars leaning against stainless steel fermenting tanks gave the cellar an edge...

Whose guitars are they? And, where are their people? And then, they appeared, **Duo Gadjo**. The music... I felt like I was inside the movie *A Good Year*. You know the scene; Max is embracing Fanny Chenal, and saying, "Forgive my lips.



They find joy in the most unusual places." Warm, silky images of the countryside and a chateaux, table cloths and old books on shelves... How romantic. I knew the music had French influences...



## On Duo

### Gadjo's Website page

*She was born in France. He was born in San Francisco. She listened to Piaf, Montant, and Trenet. He listened to Louis Armstrong and Muddy Waters. She is **Isabelle Fontaine**. He is **Jeff Magidson**. Together they are known as **Duo Gadjo**. Their music celebrates the union of two cultures, largely inspired by the sounds of the 20's and 30's, when jazz was the thing and Paris was the place to be.*

I continued to take pictures with familiar and comforting background music, and then I knew it was time to let go. I had all I needed to know for right now; more would come later. We had had that magic rendezvous in the cellar. The one I knew was waiting, and then coming away with more great wine memories.



Jo Diaz on May 16th, 2016 12:01 am