

7
SAN FRANCISCO
7

BITE INTO THIS...

2006 **EAT+**
DRINK

(THE BEST DAMN FOOD ISSUE EVER)



February '06 www.7x7mag.com \$4.00



OUR ANNUAL
**GUIDE TO
DEVOURING**
SAN FRANCISCO

The Vines That Bind

PROPOSE A WINE-COUNTRY TOAST AMID THE OLIVE GROVES AT A 33-ACRE HILLSIDE RESORT.
BY RACHEL SWABY



Napa Valley is a popular destination for Bay Area weddings; great wine, expensive linens and romantic ambiance are a given, and it's close to home. But for discerning lovebirds seeking the rarest varietal of luxury, Auberge du Soleil, which hosts nearly 100 ceremonies each year, is to newlyweds what the French Laundry is to foodies: the best of the best. The Rutherford resort may not be what you'd call an all-inclusive wedding destination—\$4,500 only covers the site fee, and couples must make their own arrangements for photographer, flowers and cake—but cottage suites, four-star cuisine prepared by chef Robert Curry and spectacular views make Auberge the premier locale for Wine Country weddings.

And it's no wonder. A wisteria-entwined trellis and hillside deck can host parties of 75 (seated) to 120 (standing) guests, and provide picture-perfect photo ops against a panorama of vineyards. In summer, the climate is ideal for alfresco nuptials and, although November bride Rhonda Keese Grote recommends renting space heaters during cooler months, she says the transition from outdoor veranda to indoor reception was "seamless."

Grote, whose now-husband discovered Auberge 10 years ago while visiting from Dallas, says that Auberge is, without question, worthy of its accolades. "Jeb keeps up with the best resorts around the country," she says, "and this one tops our list." Impeccable service provided—by sales and catering manager Suzy Berberian—was a big draw for Grote, who was particularly pleased with her culinary experience. Sommelier Kris Margerum worked with her to select the best pairings—"he let us know of everything he had access to, not just what was on his list"—and she's still raving about chef Curry's wild mushroom tarts and roast pork loin with French lentils.

Berberian sees to it that no detail is overlooked. A private staircase leads from the ceremony site to one of three "great rooms" for the reception, where all dinners are set with crystal stemware and china from Villeroy & Boch. After the party, Auberge accommodations bring the honeymoon within steps. Large suites offer fireplaces, terrace soaking tubs and California-style beds covered in Italian linens. Rooms are pricey, but honeymooners can expect a few special treats on the house. "When we got back to our room, [the Auberge staff] had delivered my cake and veil," recalls Grote, "along with a complimentary bottle of Champagne and a little Bundt-cake midnight snack." With a your-wish-is-our-command attitude, Auberge leaves brides little to complain about. Berkeley resident Alison Williams, who was married there last August, couldn't have been happier with her choice, though she did have one regret. "I wish we could have stayed longer." x

When we got back to our room, [the Auberge staff] had delivered my cake and veil," recalls Grote, "along with a complimentary bottle of Champagne and a little Bundt-cake midnight snack." With a your-wish-is-our-command attitude, Auberge leaves brides little to complain about. Berkeley resident Alison Williams, who was married there last August, couldn't have been happier with her choice, though she did have one regret. "I wish we could have stayed longer." x

AUBERGE DU SOLEIL
180 RUTHERFORD HILL
RD., RUTHERFORD, CA
800-348-5406
WWW.AUBERGE
DUSOLEIL.COM

OTHER WINE COUNTRY WEDDING DESTINATIONS

**MARRIOTT: NAPA VALLEY
HOTEL AND SPA**
3425 SOLANO AVE., NAPA
707-253-8600
WWW.NAPAVALLEY
MARRIOTT.COM
WITH A 500-GUEST
RECEPTION CAPACITY, YOU
CAN INVITE EVERYONE
AND THEIR MOTHER.

**THE BLUE VIOLET
MANSION**
443 BROWN ST., NAPA
707-253-2583
WWW.BLUEVIOLET
MANSION.COM
THE OUTDOOR GAZEBO
AND GRAND SALON
ARE IDEAL FOR
INTIMATE CEREMONIES
AND RECEPTIONS,
RESPECTIVELY.

VILLAGIO INN AND SPA
6481 WASHINGTON ST.
YOUNTVILLE
800-351-1133
WWW.VILLAGIO.COM
ENJOY DEEP-TISSUE OR
RIVER-STONE MASSAGE
ON-SITE TO KNEAD OUT
PRE-WEDDING JITTERS.

KENWOOD INN
10400 SONOMA HIGHWAY
KENWOOD
800-353-6966
LOCATED IN THE VALLEY
OF THE MOON, THIS VILLA
CAN ACCOMMODATE
UP TO 70 GUESTS FOR
OUTDOOR CEREMONIES
AND RECEPTIONS JUNE
THROUGH SEPTEMBER.



RUSTIC AND RELAXED: THE WINE COUNTRY IS THE PLACE TO BE WED.

STEPHANIE RAUSHER, ANGIE SILVY