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# The Food and Wine Issue

OUR ANNUAL GOURMET GUIDE

West Coast



Wine Weekends

FROM NAPA VALLEY NORTH TO YAKIMA VALLEY, HERE'S HOW TO SPEND THREE GLORIOUS WEEKENDS SAMPLING THE WESTERN STATES' WINE-COUNTRY BOUNTY. BY MICHAEL KAPLAN



**F**ew things are more enjoyable than landing in a great wine region, touring the area, drinking locally produced vintages, eating farm-fresh food, and indulging in a spa treatment or two. It is undoubtedly one of the best ways to get a taste of the good life.

While it's nice to luxuriate in one appellation or another, we're suggesting a northwestern swing that allows you to take in the best of three distinct areas: venerable Napa Valley,

located north of San Francisco; Willamette Valley, the pinot noir capital that's situated near Portland; and Yakima Valley, southeast of Seattle, with its broad selection of locally produced wines.

Taken individually, each region is divine. Together, they provide a sampling of American food and wine at their finest.

Given a glorious three-day weekend in each place, here is how we suggest you enjoy your time. >

Energy and Environmental Design), which proves that the folks at CADE care as much about the environment as their excellent cabernet sauvignon.

After a day of tasting, you'll check in at Auberge du Soleil, one of the most sybaritic properties in the entire wine region. Rooms are decorated with Mediterranean flair, bedding is down, linens are Italian, and the private balconies are divine. Unwind with a warm grape-seed-oil massage, a bit of steam, and a quick swim in the pool. Then it's time for dinner at the Auberge restaurant, where local lamb and duck rule the menu.

After dessert, head off to Martini House for a sampling from its wine list, which is 600 bottles strong and just might get you thinking about installing a wine cellar at home.

**SUNDAY** Breakfast at Auberge is not to be missed. House specialties include blueberry pancakes, smoked-salmon pizza, and crisp waffles accompanied by citrus Chantilly

cream. Be sure to reserve a table on the veranda where the views and ambience are spectacular.

Next, head to Solage Calistoga, where you will be pampered yet again. Situated in the mud-bath capital, Solage is the poshest option for this treatment. Sinking into a tub full of mud is surprisingly sublime. Once cleaned of mud, soaking in mineral water can be a rush in its own right.

Cleaned up and happy to have one more unusual experience under your belt, proceed to Dana Estates for your last wine stop of the weekend. Be sure to get on their mailing list ahead of time (see sidebar for website) so that you can get an appointment, but you'll be glad you did after sipping the high-end cabs that are worth their price of \$275 per bottle.

Finish up with a classic Napa Valley lunch at the casual but excellent Mustards Grill, where area winemakers have been known to pop in and test-drive new releases with Mustards' seafood tostadas and chipotle quail. ➤

## WINE WEEKEND ESSENTIALS Napa Valley, California

**Bottega:** (707) 945-1050, botteganapavalley.com  
**Cliff Lede Vineyards:** (707) 944-8642, cliffledevineyards.com  
**Poetry Inn:** (707) 944-0646, poetryinn.com  
**Go Fish:** (707) 963-0700, gofishrestaurant.net  
**Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley:** (707) 944-0889, maisonry.com  
**Bouchon Bakery:** (707) 944-2253, bouchonbakery.com  
**Paraduxx:** (707) 945-0890, paraduxx.com  
**Ladera Vineyards:** (707) 965-2445, laderavineyards.com  
**CADE Winery:** (707) 965-2746, cadewinery.com  
**Auberge du Soleil:** (707) 963-1211, aubergedusoleil.com  
**Martini House:** (707) 963-2233, martinihouse.com  
**Solage Calistoga:** (707) 226-0800, solagecalistoga.com  
**Dana Estates:** (707) 963-4365, danaestates.com  
**Mustards Grill:** (707) 944-2424, mustardsgrill.com



**FRIDAY** Opt for the slow but scenic journey from San Francisco, crossing the Golden Gate Bridge and heading up to Route 12. When you start seeing grapevines lacing the roadside, you know you're nearing oenophile heaven.

Before sampling the wine, you'll need to have a good lunch. A perfect place for this is Bottega, with its comfortable, modern-yet-rustic dining room. The Italian menu boasts house-made pastas as well as house-cured salumi and prosciutto that are not to be missed. As if that's not enough, the wine prices there are very reasonable.

Properly sated and en route to your hotel, make a quick stop at Cliff Lede Vineyards. It's a picturesque 60-acre sprawl in the famed Stag's Leap District of Napa Valley. More than likely, you will be able to taste claret, sauvignon blanc, and cabernet sauvignon. Take your glass of red or white out to the porch, sit on the swing, and get acclimated to California wine country.

By now it's midafternoon and time to register at Poetry Inn, a unique, intimate hotel where you feel like a visi-

tor in the private guest quarters of a well-heeled friend's home.

Indulge in a massage before having dinner at Go Fish, a high-end restaurant where you'll learn that wine pairs with sushi as well as it does with dry-aged rib-eye steak.

If you're up for a nightcap, check out Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley for a sampling of limited-edition boutique wines. On cool nights, folks gravitate to the fire pit for good sipping and convivial conversation.

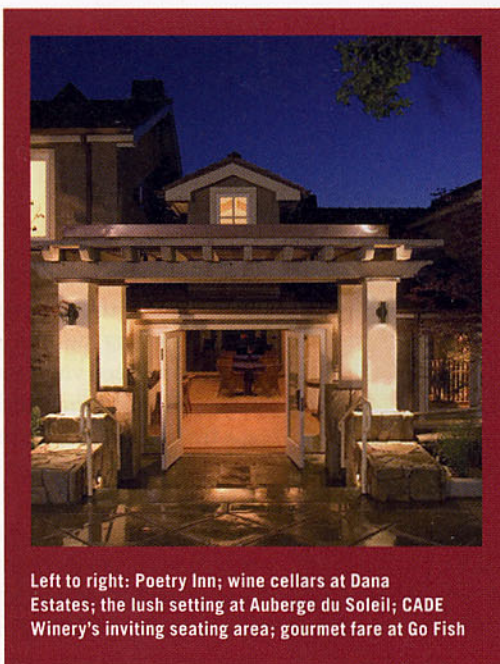
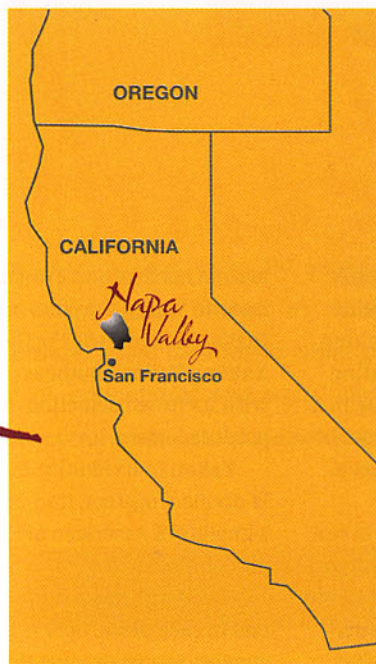
**SATURDAY** Start the morning off with Poetry Inn's Brie-stuffed French toast or eggs Benedict. After filling up and before taking off, make a quick stop at Thomas Keller's Bouchon Bakery and stock your picnic basket for later in the day. Depending on your mood, you might want to go for a selection of house-made salads and soups or foie gras. In any case, be sure to pick up a few of Keller's absolutely perfect baguettes.

Begin your wine drinking at Paraduxx, where the blended reds are superb and tasting-room accommo-

dations rank among the area's hippest. Those who opt for the Enhanced Tasting get to try limited-edition vintages. After sampling Paraduxx's wine (Paraduxx Napa Valley Red is bright and plummy and well worth a taste), stick around for the Blend Experience and take a shot at creating your own.

Head from there to Ladera Vineyards, on Howell Mountain. Congenial proprietors Pat and Anne Stotesbery may take you on a tour of the family-run operation and provide the inside story on Ladera's rugged mountain cabernets. After the tasting, grab your lunch from Bouchon, along with a bottle of, say, Ladera malbec, and drive to a nice spot for the kind of picnic that you can only have in wine country.

After lunch, on the way to your accommodations for the night, take a slight detour and hit CADE Winery, which ranks among the greenest in California. It's currently on track to achieve Gold LEED certification (LEED stands for Leadership in



Left to right: Poetry Inn; wine cellars at Dana Estates; the lush setting at Auberge du Soleil; CADE Winery's inviting seating area; gourmet fare at Go Fish

