

# SIGNATURE

THE  
FOODIE  
ISSUE

*GERARD  
BUTLER*

TALKS  
SURFING,  
PAPARAZZI  
AND  
KEEPING A  
STRAIGHT  
FACE

NIKKI REED  
ON FANGS,  
FANS AND  
FASHION



# napa valley wine country

by Leah Soloff

Napa Valley is only a six hour drive from Los Angeles, but feels like another world. The hotel we chose for our first foray into wine country was **Auberge Du Soleil**, a beautiful property that sits atop **Rutherford Hill**, overlooking the lush valley.

Our first stop was **Darioush Winery**. Darioush Khaledi modeled his chateau after the ancient city of Persepolis, and each stone in his winery was transported from the Persian city for construction. Schedule a tour of this beautiful property and taste the many varieties of red and white wine that are produced on the grounds.

After the tasting, we headed back to the hotel for dinner; I recommend Chef Robert Curry's celebrated three course tasting menu for a dining experience that is as rich and lush as the wines that are served. Our waitress recommended a wine called **El Ilano**, from the **Mi Sueno Winery**, whose vintner, Rolando Herrera, used to be a dishwasher at the Auberge restaurant over twenty-five years ago.

If you plan to visit more than one winery in a day, it is advisable to hire a car service. We began the day by visiting **Chimney Rock**, which is reminiscent of a large Dutch chateau and features a delectable selection

of cabernets. Our next destination was the beautiful vineyards of **Heitz Cellars**; Heitz's celebrated Martha's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon was selected by Wine Spectator as one of the Top 12 wines of the 20th Century and is worth a taste.

Next, our travels led us to Main Street in St. Helena for the ultimate in wine country shopping. A must-visit is the olive oil shop on Main Street called **Olivier**. In addition to the oils, they also sell various spreads and sauces and encourage you to try before you buy! Be sure to sample the truffle-infused artichoke dip.

To conclude our visit, we visited the acclaimed **French Laundry** restaurant; housed in a building that was constructed in the 1880s. We were amazed at the complexity of the ten course tasting menu, which Chef Thomas Keller puts together anew every day, with fresh ingredients from the restaurant's garden. My favorite dish was a Sabayon of Pearl Tapioca with Island Creek Oysters and White Sturgeon Caviar. This extravagant culinary experience was the highlight of our trip. Don't forget to plan ahead, as they are booked 2-3 months in advance. The French Laundry was the perfect punctuation to a blissful Napa getaway.



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