

# National Capital Sommelier Guild

## La Guilde des Sommeliers de la Capitale Nationale

99 Fifth Avenue - Suite 130, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5P5

[www.sommelierguild.com](http://www.sommelierguild.com) Telephone (613) 237-7911

### AUGUST 2002

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### August

- 6 Battle of the Giants – No Holds Barred!
- 7 How to Succeed in the Big Apple
- 8 The Best of Italy – Part II
- 18 Summer in the City!!

##### September

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- a Guild exclusive
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- 25 Dining with Class
- 26 Top Premium Canadian Reds & a  
Few Whites

*“History says that speed is always better – except in the making of wine, cheese and love.”*

Alexander Slocum

#### Moderation is a sign of good taste

The National Capital Sommelier Guild strongly supports moderate and responsible consumption of wine and spirits. Guild dinner events allow a designated driver to attend at a reduced price. The designated driver will not be served alcohol. Guild tasting events provide and encourage the use of spit buckets. As well, at every event, the organizer will arrange a method of safe transportation home for you or your friends upon request.

#### Vintages Pre-Release

Thursday, 19 September, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

*Chelsea Club, 236 Metcalfe (at Somerset)*

Mark these dates on your calendar and plan to join those who have made this **Guild Signature Event** a regular feature of their wine life. These events provide an opportunity to sample several of the wines to be released by *Vintages* on the following Saturday.

The wines are always tasted blind, allowing the quality of each to shine through without the distortions that often result from knowing the producer's reputation and/or the

price range. These tastings give us an opportunity to discover well-made, inexpensive wines, little-known and often ignored quality wines, wines that offer an exceptional price/quality relationship and, to the extent possible, more expensive, highly-reputed wines that most would not experience otherwise.

**Members & Sponsored Guest \$25 each**

**Non-members \$35**

## Battle of the Giants – No Holds Barred!

Tuesday, 6 August 2002, 6:30 p.m. for welcoming wine – 7:00 p.m. for Dinner

*Heritage Inn, 2607 Queen Street in Cumberland, Ontario (613) 833-3000*

It's Australia versus California and you do not want to miss it. Get your ring-side seats for this fight-to-the-finish between 2 formidable WW (Wine World) heavyweights. Fight is scheduled for 7 rounds and here is the tale of the tape to see how these pugilists weigh in. Referee will be Mark Bruni, Manager Eastern Ontario, of Beringer (California) / Blass (Australia) wines. With a foot in each corner, you know Mark will let these 2 flail away, right from the opening bell. Heritage Inn provides the perfect culinary setting!

**Round One:** Canapés matched by welcoming wines: Wolf Blass Riesling and Beringer White Zinfandel.

**Round Two:** Mixed Green Salad w/Dates and spiced Vinaigrette with a Wolf Blass and a Meridian Sauvignon Blanc.

**Round Three:** Cold Black Bean and Mango Soup with Black Opal Chardonnay and Beringer Founders' Estate Chardonnay.

**Round Four:** Roasted Quail with a Fresh Herb Rub w/Green Olive Sauce accompanied by Annie's Lane Shiraz and Meridian Syrah.

**Round Five:** Sorbet – combatants rest up for the main event.

**Round Six:** Regional Roasted Leg of Lamb Served w/Honey & Cumin Glaze, Seasonal Vegetables, Lebanese couscous along with Wolf Blass Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Château Souverain Winemaker's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Round Seven:** Pecan and Blue Cheese "Papillon Noir" Pie and Wolf Blass Noble Gold Botrytis Riesling.

Designated Driver \$50

Trade Members \$80

Members and Invited Guest \$85

Non-members \$90

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## How to Succeed in the Big Apple – An Insider's Report

Wednesday, 7 August 2002, 7:00 p.m.

*Restaurant International, Building H, Algonquin College, Woodroffe Campus*

What is it you would like to know about the high-powered restaurant scene in New York City? And Paris?

The expectations and what it means?

The celebrities and their quirks?

The successes and why they are?

**Steve Beckta**, Ottawa native and graduate of Algonquin's Sommelier program, has been making it big in the Big Apple. After some years as sommelier at **Café Boulud**, he now plays the same role at Danny Meyer's **Eleven Madison Park**. Not content with working with such stars as Daniel Boulud and Meyer, he is just back from spending some time at **Alain Ducasse's Paris restaurant and Taillevent**, both Michelin three-star establishments.

Steve will share with us what makes such different individuals as **Boulud, Meyer, Ducasse and Vrinat** successful as they have been. His anecdotes on the habits and idiosyncrasies of the celebrities and wannabes that people the New York and Paris restaurant scenes will entertain and delight you.

But above all you will want to hear first-hand how a young Canadian can succeed in this hothouse atmosphere.

This is a Guild event, so there will be wine and some food.

Steve will present three wines selected from the Eleven Madison Park list, wines that are on allocation and therefore rarely available to the general public. **All of the wines have been rated in the 90's by Wine Spectator and/or Stephen Tanzer.** The first, a **Viognier made by Ehren Jordan**, who used to work with the legendary Helen Turley, has been described as "a super rich wine, dense, complex and with a very long finish". Next is a **Russian River Pinot Noir from the DuMOL Wine Company** described by WS as "...ripe, lush cherry, currant and earth flavours...and the finish sails on forever". The third one is a **White Cottage Cab from Howell Mountain** that Steve says "is just so &#!@\*# delicious". They will be augmented by several Niagara wines picked by Steve and several NYC sommelier colleagues as being as good in their category as any wine from anywhere. They will include such current rarities as **Gunther Funk's Pinot Noir and Mailvoire's 2000 Pinot Gris**. In order to allow us to fully appreciate the qualities of each of the wines we will also match them with tasting portions of several dishes.

Given the nature of the event, an invitation to participate is being extended to students and all past graduates of the Algonquin Sommelier program.

Trade Members \$40

Members and Invited Guest and Algonquin students and graduates \$50

Non-members \$60

## The Best of Italy Part II - Southern Italy

**SOLD OUT!**

Thursday, 8 August 2002, 7:00 p.m.

*Trattoria Caffè Italia, 254 Preston St. (at Gladstone)*

Italy is more than Tuscany and Piedmont, to prove it we are offering the Best of Italy Part II, the southern response. Did you know that 2000 years ago the Romans declared a number of Grand Crus (yes two millennia before the 1855 classification of the Medoc)? All of them were found in

Southern Italy. Those lucky enough to have a seat at this event will get to taste some very interesting and different wines from Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria and Sicilia.

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## Summer in the City!!!

Sunday, August 18 2002, 6:30 p.m. for dinner at 7:00 p.m.

*The Village Cafe, 295 Richmond Road, between Churchill & Kirkwood*

In the hot days of August a relaxed and casual approach to dining is in order. Your Guild will co-operate with a summer dinner based on fresh produce and approachable wines in a funky Westboro restaurant. The chef at the Village Café - he is also a co-owner - has planned a four course dinner including a vegetarian option as shown below. The restaurant will open exclusively for the Guild on this occasion but seating is limited to forty.

### -RECEPTION-

*White Port by Taylor, Fladgate & Yeatman served cold*

### -FIRST-

Oven roasted tomatillo, vidalia onion & Bulgarian feta soup with ciabatta croutons

**\*\*1998 Strewn Estates Terroir Chardonnay\*\***

### -SECOND-

Panko breaded ocean perch drizzled with vine ripened Roma tomatoes and red onion coulis atop a bed of field greens

**Designated Driver \$45**

**Trade Members \$55**

**Members & Invited Guest \$60**

**Non-members \$65**

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## The Winemaker from Caliterra – a Guild exclusive!

Thursday, September 5 2002, 7:00 p.m.

*Trattoria Caffè Italia 254 Preston St. (at Gladstone) Parking at rear or at Preston Hardware Store*

A Chilean winemaker stops in Ottawa for one evening **only** and conducts a tutored tasting **exclusively** for Guild members and guests! Through the **generosity of Gord Weber and the Phillippe Dandurand Wine Agency**, this tasting also offers exceptional value for money!

An event to whet your appetite for the upcoming Wine and Food Show where Chile will be the featured country. A full range of more than a dozen wines, predominantly red, will be offered. They include several Caliterra and Caliterra Reserve wines, selections from the premium Arboleda range and the super premium Don Maximiano and Señá (both >\$70 per bottle). Look for Cabernet, Syrah, Merlot and 'Carmenère'.

**Rodrigo Banto, Chief Winemaker of Caliterra wines**, will be our guest and lead the tasting. He is also on the winemaking team for the world class 'Señá'. Rodrigo, born in Santiago, Chile, graduated in 1994 from the Universidad

Católica de Chile with a degree in agronomy and enology. He worked the '96 vintage in France with the Lurton family of Bordeaux and the '97 vintage in the U.S. at Flora Springs Winery in Napa. "These international experiences improved my winemaking skills, while broadening my perspective," said he.

At La Arboleda, Caliterra's state-of-the-art gravity-flow winery built in 1998, Rodrigo tastes and blends the wines with the help of two enologists and Mondavi's Tony Coltrin. "La Arboleda is a real joint venture winery -- a true composite of ideas," Rodrigo explained. "Our team philosophy at Caliterra is to continue improving the wines. We are working even closer with the vineyards and enhancing our winemaking technology".

**Maximum of 47 persons** Light cuisine will be matched to each flight and served throughout the evening.

**Trade Members \$25**

**Members and Invited Guest \$30**

**Non-members \$35**

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## Top Premium Canadian Reds and a Few Whites

Thursday, September 26 2002, 7:00 p.m.

*Chelsea Club, 236 Metcalfe (at Somerset)*

Ever since Canadian producers made up their minds that their future lay in producing vinifera-based wines, there has been a race to top quality. Originally this was spurred by small, boutique wineries where passionate winemakers were striving to create a niche and a name for themselves. Today, even the big guys are making small-batch, very high quality wines. The challenge for most wine lovers is first, to find the wines, so rare many have become; and second, to afford them as they have often climbed in price as fast as they have improved in heft and quality.

You may have heard of wines such as the Trius from Hillebrand, Trivalente from Pillitteri, Oculus from Mission Hill, Pinnacle from Sumac Ridge and various high-priced blends and varietals from Malivoire, Pillitteri, Thirty Bench,

Daniel Lenko, Inniskillin, Jackson-Triggs and Peller Estates in Niagara, plus those rarely seen in Ontario from Burrowing Owl, CedarCreek, Hawthorne Mountain, Sumac Ridge and Mission Hill from B.C. While the intent is to taste and enjoy the wines, there may creep in an element of competition between the champions of each of these wine regions.

Here is your chance to experience them. We have been able to lay our hands on many these medalled wines, most of them premium reds. However to avoid being totally characterized as red chauvinists, we have selected some very top whites from the half dozen or so most highly-prized white varietal wines.

**For an event of this nature and given the rarity of the wines, seating is obviously limited. Reserve early!**

Trade Members \$35

Members and Invited Guest \$40

Non-members \$50

## Dining with Class

Wednesday, September 25, 6:30 p.m. for dinner at 7:00 p.m.

*Restaurant International, Algonquin College, Woodroffe Campus (parking in front of building)*

This is a 'heads up' for an event that proved so wildly popular that we couldn't resist an encore! Impossible to provide a menu as our carefully chosen Chef is traveling and sourcing new and innovative recipes for this event. For now, mark this as a definite 'dinner date' in your calendar. 'Dining with Class' events always include a 'demo' and an instructional talk from the Chef.

The next newsletter will provide you with a set menu of 6 courses and at least 7 matching wines plus the opportunity

to register. Expect a price in the \$60 to \$70 per person range (includes tax and gratuity), providing sensational value considering that your \$50 per person food and wine bill in any fine restaurant leaps to at least that with tip and tax. Your Guild membership offers many advantages! Seating will be limited to 56 persons.

**Reservations will only be taken after publication of the September newsletter.**

## Guild Business

### The Guild's New Address!

Please note, in your address book, the Guild's mailing address:  
**99 Fifth Avenue - Suite 130, Ottawa, ON K1S 5P5**

### Email - an essential Guild communication tool

We now have close to 80% of our membership on email and this has become an essential and rapid way to reach the greater majority of our members with event information and special offers. Our experience shows at least 5 email addresses per month become stale, so please help us serve you better by letting us know of any change to your email address.

**We would like to update the email addresses of the following members:** Khristian Laroche, Linda MacGowan, Brendan Quinn, David Rueter and Dominic Santaguida

Please send your information to [dupont@sympatico.ca](mailto:dupont@sympatico.ca)

### Welcome our Newest Members

**Leigh Gabourie**

**Joe Hatz**

**Patricia Hay**

**Elaine Hoskins**

**Joanne Laskoski**

**Marc Lépine**

**Please offer them a warm welcome**

## Event Registration - how you can help our volunteer registrar

One of the keystones of the Guild's operations is the work done by our registrar. It's also a very time-consuming and demanding job. **You can help make it easier to serve you better by registering for events by email rather than by phone.** We have realized a significant increase in the number of events and number of participants over the past year and too often this has led to cancellations with many occurring at the very last minute. This causes additional workload as the registrar has, in the past, sought to fill the seats by contacting people on a waiting list. This has reached an unacceptable level. Therefore **the Board has directed the registrar to strictly enforce the Guild's long-standing Cancellation Policy:**

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Cancellations must be made by informing the Registrar **at least 72 hours before the event** If you do so you will not be charged for the event and the registrar will endeavour to fill the seat from a waiting list, if there is one.

**If you cancel less than 72 hours before the event, you will be charged for the event.** Otherwise, you will be responsible for finding an alternate to fill your seat and when you do so, you must notify the registrar of your alternate's name at least 12 hours prior to the event. If you do so, you will not be charged.

## Volunteers for the Ottawa Wine and Food Show 1, 2, 3 November, 2002

Once again the Guild will be a prominent participant at the show. We have need of volunteers who are willing to devote three or four hours of their time, per shift, to attend our booth. It requires arrival ten minutes before each shift, to remain at the booth throughout the shift, business dress, and a willingness to speak to attendees of the show about the Guild and to assist them in participating in our booth tasting. We also require members to assist Vice President, Mike Cowen, in the tasting room.

Arrangements will be made for show entrance, name tag and a briefing ten minutes prior to your shift. Please send along your name and availability to: Joseph Phelan Phone (613) 241-1418 or e-mail to [joseph.phelan@ottawa.ca](mailto:joseph.phelan@ottawa.ca) indicating your willingness to assist.

The following is indicative of the information required. Show hours are: 12 to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 12 to 6 p.m. Sunday.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to attend the Guild Booth on  
Friday, 1 November from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_ (or  
anytime) \_\_\_\_ (check))  
Saturday, 2 November from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_ (or  
anytime) \_\_\_\_ (check))  
Sunday, 3 November from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_ (or  
anytime) \_\_\_\_ (check))  
You may contact me by Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

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## Items of Special Interest to Guild Members

### Eastern Ontario Amateur Winemakers' Competition/Awards Dinner & Dance

Do you remember a few years ago when a couple of local amateur winemakers challenged their "betters" (Napa Valley) to a blind tasting of varietals at the Guild? Even though the Napa's were triple or quadruple the price, our local amateurs trounced the Americans in all categories, hands down! Well, you can again taste some of the outstanding products of local amateur winemakers at this year's Eastern Ontario Amateur Winemakers' Competition. The competition (if anyone has wines they want to enter)

will be held here in Ottawa in September. All the wines will be available for tasting, there will be a four-course dinner, dance and door prizes at the Sala San Marco on Friday, September 20 at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased from Allison Fader - call 997-3704. (Tickets must be purchased by Sept. 17 - none are available at the door.) For more information, see the website at <http://members.rogers.com/eoawc>.

### The Ottawa Art Gallery and Arts Court Foundation's Tenth Annual Wine Auction

October 9, 2002, 6:00p.m.

*Arts Court Theatre, 2 Daly Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.*

Wine consultant Nico van Duyenbode, who holds the awards Canadian Wine Taster of the Year and President's

Cup for the Ontario Wine and Spirits Importers Association, has curated the wines for auction. He also represented Canada as a team taster for the German

Wine Tasting Championships 1986 and 1990. Participants will enjoy an array of hors d'oeuvres and wine tasting while previewing the items available for auction.

The collection of over 100 lot will appeal to the most discriminating connoisseur, but there are also items

of interest for newcomers. Mailed and faxed bids and credit card payments are welcomed.

Delivery can be arranged for out-of-town purchases. For information and tickets, call (613) 233-8699 ext. 221 or (613) 569-4821 ext. 232. Fax (613) 569-7660

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## Special Offers to Guild Members!

**CA Paradis** has been serving Ottawa restaurants and wine lovers for 80 years. Guild member Diane Paradis would like to offer a **10% discount on all regularly priced merchandise** to all Guild members. Next time you're

shopping at CA Paradis discreetly identify yourself as member of the NCSG, show your membership card, and enjoy the savings.

**Vines** magazine is a bi-monthly, up-scale glossy that has a primary focus on the Canadian wine scene. It offers tasting notes and evaluations on easily available wines, articles on wineries and wine makers and feature articles on regional cuisine. The publisher has agreed to accept subscriptions from Guild members at a 50% discount. This makes the

yearly subscription of 6 issues only \$7.50! Order your subscription by writing to: **Vines Magazine, 159 York Street, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6E9**. Simply send them a cheque for \$7.50, include your name and address and let them know you are a member of the National Capital Sommelier Guild. Good wine reading!

**An Offer for Collectors of Wine Implements** Many Guild members are also collectors. Obviously they collect wines, but many others collect wine paraphernalia: corkscrews, carafes, foil cutters, etc. ...and some even collect antiques. Those who harbour a passion for antique wine accessories might find that rare piece missing from their collection at **Ernest Johnson Antiques** Ernest is a

long time Guild member and informs us that he can show you some fine antique decanters, funnels, spirit tags, wine coasters and corkscrews. Guild members will benefit from a discount of at least 10% on their purchases. The shop is located at 292 MacKay Street at the corner of Dufferin Road in New Edinburgh. It is open Thursday to Sunday. You can call Ernest at 741-8565 for more information.

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## News and Views

### Million Dollar Chardonnay Challenge is Cancelled *from Harpers*

The University of British Columbia has announced that its Chardonnay of the Century Million Dollar Challenge has been cancelled, due to the 'economic climate reigning since September last year'. Hennie van Vuuren, professor at the university's Faculty of Agricultural Sciences' Wine Research Centre, said: 'It has proven impossible to raise

the required level of sponsorship and entry support to assure a viable and credible competition.' In thanking contributors and participants who had signed up for the event, Professor van Vuuren said: 'We have every intention of revisiting the idea of using a competition to attract outstanding wines for research.'

### Thank You for not Rinsing your Glass in the Spit Bucket

*by Dave McIntyre*

#### The do's and don'ts of tasting-room etiquette

#### Miss Manners would be horrified!

A young couple on a limousine tour of the Napa Valley became carried away by the romantic surroundings at Domaine Carneros, the Taittinger property known for elegant bubbly. Some minutes after sampling the Brut

Cuvée, they were discovered in a storage room in *flagrante delicto* atop cases of Le Rêve, the winery's dreamy *tête de cuvée*.

Or how about the man who approached the tasting counter at Fox Run Vineyards in the Finger Lakes one snowy February day without a stitch of clothing on? As he asked a series of alarmingly knowledgeable questions about Fox Run's wines, tasting room manager Jim Clapp calmly said, "You know, the sheriff here in Yates County doesn't look kindly on people walking around without any clothes."

The man strolled out and returned a few minutes later, fully clothed.

Sam Sharp, a wine educator at Clos du Val winery along the Silverado Trail, will never forget a private tasting he gave to a group of young women who seemed, well, less than interested in the wines. One kept trying to kiss him, while another was more intent on sampling his underwear than the Palisade Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. "I thought I must be looking pretty good that day," he says. Alas, he was the victim of a bachelorette party scavenger hunt.

These are extreme examples of improper etiquette that you, as a self-respecting wine lover, would never commit during your pilgrimages to wine country. Nonetheless, visits to wineries can be filled with pitfalls that might mar an otherwise memorable experience. And that does neither you nor the winery any good.

Winery "etiquette" might not be important if your goal is to taste as many wines as you can in an afternoon's dash up Route 29 in the Napa Valley. But is that why you spent the money on plane fare and lodging, or that fancy dinner in San Francisco? Do you really want to be blotto when you show up for your long-sought-after reservation at The French Laundry? Why not ensure that you get the most out of your wine country visit?

We asked several wineries around the nation for advice on how to make a winery visit the best experience possible. For example, should one call ahead for an appointment? When is a purchase—of wine or a souvenir—expected? Should a customer seek a reference from a retailer or distributor to a favorite winery? And what are some of the really stupid things winery visitors have asked, said or done, so we can avoid those mistakes?

## **Know Your Spit Bucket**

Not surprisingly, several responses featured spit buckets. Dedicated oenogeeks expect to expectorate when tasting several wines, in order to avoid inebriation. But many winery visitors are not experienced spitters, and this can lead to more trouble than shirt stains. Every winery tasting room will have two or three items on the counter: a spit or dump bucket, a water pitcher so you can rinse your glass and dilute the wine in your system, and a bowl of dry, mealy crackers for clearing your palate. Don't be embarrassed to pour wine out of your glass into the spit bucket; you will not be insulting the person behind the counter. If you're self-conscious about spitting, practice at home (with water) before your trip. Watch out not only for dribbles but also ricochets. Most important, use the bucket; there are some very profitable carpet cleaning businesses in wine country because of tourists who shake out their wine glasses—or spit their wine—directly onto a tasting room floor.

Some people are unfamiliar with the routine. As one couple at a Kendall-Jackson tasting room listened to a description of the wines they were about to taste, the woman pulled a mint from her mouth and said, "Guess I won't need this." She put it in the cracker bowl.

And be aware of which is the spit bucket and which is the water pitcher. Luca Paschina, winemaker at Barbourville Vineyards near Charlottesville, Virginia, recalls one visitor who blithely picked up the spit bucket and asked, "Mind if I rinse my glass?"

"Good idea," Paschina replied. "But you might want to try the water pitcher."

Fox Run Vineyards, in Penn Yan, New York, used to sell water carafes with a grape motif in its tasting room. At least once a week, owner Scott Osborn says, someone would inspect the knick-knacks on sale, then proceed to the tasting bar and turn over a full carafe, looking for the pricetag. Water everywhere. Sonoma County's Dry Creek Vineyards switched to less attractive, spit buckets for the same reason.

## **Call Ahead for an Appointment**

Wineries differ in their advice on whether to call ahead for an appointment. In larger wine areas that are well established as tourist destinations, such as Napa or Sonoma, there will be enough wineries with open hours or regularly scheduled tours that you can point to a page in a guidebook and just go.

If you want more than the basic tourist experience at your favorite winery, splurge on a phone call, even a day in advance. Many wineries employ wine educators to conduct extensive tours by appointment. Appointments are always advisable for large groups.

In areas off the beaten path, definitely call ahead. "Visitors often receive better treatment if they set an appointment," says Eric Dunham, crafter of fine Cabernet and Syrah at Dunham Cellars in Walla Walla, Washington. "It allows time to try and schedule the winemaker to be present, and in smaller wine regions, especially, it will be appreciated."

Many wineries do not have public tasting rooms because of their licenses or limited facilities. That does not mean that they do not welcome visitors, however. Calling ahead may get you an appointment with the winemaker. The worst that can happen is they say no. Some wineries make special arrangements for small or large groups that go well beyond the typical winery experience. Swanson Vineyards offers "salon" tastings for small or large groups; there's a charge, but you get more than an anonymous swig of wine at a crowded tasting bar.

One important consideration that several winemakers stressed: If you arrange an appointment and find that you're running late, definitely call the winery to let them know.

## **The "Mercy Purchase"**

You walk into a winery and the total stranger at the tasting station pours you samples. Are you obligated to buy a bottle? Or a souvenir glass? Or a cork-puller? T-shirt? That obnoxious doormat that says, "We Serve Only the Finest California Wines—Did You Bring Any?"

Generally, no. The wine poured to casual tourists is part of the cost of doing business for a winery. Some wineries charge a nominal fee for a tasting, while others charge for a “reserve” tasting of older vintages or special bottlings. (These are generally worth it, by the way.) Even if you don’t pay a cent for the tasting, you are not obligated to make a purchase. The winery hopes the goodwill created by its hospitality will lead, intangibly to be sure, to future sales or favorable word of mouth.

An exception: If you have called ahead and the winery has arranged a special tasting, some purchase on the spot may be called for.

“I would never presume that someone has to purchase to taste,” says Dunham. “How could someone justify buying a \$45 bottle of wine without knowing if they like it or not?” On the other hand, he says, “if someone scheduled a tasting and I barrel-tasted them extensively, they should probably purchase something.”

If you like the wines and want to purchase a bottle, ask if the winery makes any that are not in wide commercial distribution. Why carry something home if you can pull it off your neighborhood shelf? If you’ve sampled several wines and feel you should buy something but your luggage is getting full, go for a less weighty souvenir.

And if an acquaintance ever offers you a taste of a “mercy purchase” while recounting his wonderful trip to wine country—ask what else he brought back in his suitcase.

### **Don’t try to finagle an introduction**

Wineries offered conflicting advice on whether a recommendation from a retailer or distributor will help get you special treatment. Some said an introduction (in advance) would help them “go the extra mile,” while most said it would not make much difference. It depends on the winery, its relationship to the retailer and your importance to the retailer.

### **Remember the Golden Rule**

“Be nice to people,” advises Michael Milwee, a Washington, D.C., attorney who scours California’s back roads in search of unexplored wineries on his trips home to the Golden State. (He claims to know which ones close latest in the day.) “Act serious about what you’re tasting at least until it’s clear the person behind the counter doesn’t care.”

Ask questions about the wines, the history of the winery, even the personality of the winemaker. Provided you’re not swallowed up by a large crowd, your interest will demonstrate that you’re not just there for free wine and might even coax an extra cork from its bottle or a bung from a barrel. Charm goes a long way.

Asking questions can be dangerous for the novice, of course. Guides at Robert Mondavi Winery, who have heard *everything*, are fond of explaining, “We plant roses at the end of the vine rows so we can make rosé.”

It is possible to be *too* serious, of course. Winery hosts roll their eyes when someone pulls out a notebook or—egad—a PalmPilot and starts scribbling notes. These unsavory types have a reputation for being smug and hypercritical about the wines. Then again, people wearing T-shirts proclaiming, “I’m the Dump Bucket,” or, “Drink Naked,” are not much better.

A final word of advice: Pace yourself. Start early, while your palate is still fresh, and limit yourself to two or three wineries per day. This will give you maximum time to enjoy the experience and reduce the chance that you’ll forget some of these etiquette guidelines and do something really memorable.

Notes Eileen Crane, crafter of those passion-inducing bubblyies at Domaine Carneros, “Fountains generally are not for swimming, with or without a bathing suit.”