



# The Wrath of Grapes

As Northern California's peak season takes off, discover the small-town charms of Napa's cultural and culinary capital, Yountville **By Mark A. Thompson**

NAPA: MRNY

As you stroll past the various Michelin-starred restaurants and luxury properties that dot Yountville's main street, it might be hard to imagine that this culinary capital of Napa Valley was once better known for its brothels and a rough-and-tumble ethos that kept most visitors at a distance.

While there's still a vestige of that post-Prohibition past in the town's one notorious dive bar, what most visitors to Yountville notice are the acclaimed restaurants, tasting rooms and curated galleries, several of which are located in buildings listed on the National Register.

Depending on who's doing the math, Yountville has more Michelin stars per capita than nearly any other small town in America. With just under 3,000 residents and one main street, it packs in a feast of gourmet options.

Home to more than 400 wineries, Napa County is the most upscale of Northern California's wine-growing regions—though it wasn't always so. A long hangover after the Gold Rush was followed by the inception of Prohibition, which decimated the wine industry, leaving only sacramental winemakers.

Groezinger Winery, the valley's largest winery before the Volstead Act, is now V Marketplace, home to Napa's original hot-air balloon company, **Napa Valley Aloft**. For more than 30 years, the family-run company has launched daily from the grounds of the former Groezinger estate. Apart from sprouting a pair of wings, there are few better ways to witness the beauty

of a Napa sunrise than with pilot **Jayson Kimball**, who's been flying since the age of 15; he knows the sky as well as he knows his hometown.

As you lift nearly a mile into the sky, you're encircled by panoramic views of the Mayacamas Mountains and the sculptured terrain of the Vaca range. With favorable winds, you might even glimpse the Sierras or the San Francisco skyline. The hour-long flight is followed by a champagne breakfast during which you're pinned with your own hot-air balloon wings.

## ELEGANT SANCTUARIES

One of the most inviting settings at the five-acre resort **Bardessono**, \$\$\$\$\$, is the hammock strung beneath a century-old heritage oak tree that was a part of the original Bardessono family homestead. Opened in 2009 with LEED Platinum certification and lushly landscaped with birch and olive trees, cypress and magnolias, the resort combines sustainable design with environmental ethics; nearly a thousand solar panels provide half of the hotel's power. Throughout the grounds, a rotating collection of paintings and sculpture from the Andrea Schwartz Gallery focuses on work that complements the hotel's aesthetic of luxurious environmentalism.

Its spacious suites, which include gas fireplaces and a furnished courtyard or balcony, are particularly notable for the custom bathroom that doubles as a private spa with in-suite butler service. Outdoor showers complete the illusion of living in



Large enough to store everything you'll need for a resort weekend away but compact enough to fit under the airplane seat in front of you, the **Nightswim Flight Bag** by MAST (\$245, [mastresort.com](http://mastresort.com)) is the perfect tote option for the urbane traveler seeking bespoke accessories for the road. (Each piece is individually numbered and limited edition.) The branch of SoCal native Steve Solari, MAST was founded to meld fashion with function for the runway—the airport runway. —**Stephan Horbelt**





At right:  
Bardessono (top), Bouchon Bakery, Jacobsen Orchards



harmony with nature, while a rooftop pool and deck offers panoramic vistas of the Mayacamas Mountains.

At **Poetry Inn, \$\$\$\$\$**, the nightly turndown chocolates come from chocolatier **Wendy Sherwood** of Napa's La Forêt, which also supplies the three Michelin-starred Benu in San Francisco. That little detail tells you a great deal about the standards of hospitality that mark a respite here. Perched on a bucolic hillside in the Stags Leap District, the extraordinary five-room sanctuary offers the privacy and tranquility of a fully staffed estate.

Beyond the gated drive above the Silverado Trail, the property is surrounded by vineyards and olive trees. A pool and a deck beckon, but the views from your expansive rooms with wood-burning fireplace and terrace are equally alluring—and a chef is available for private dining. Outdoor showers overlook the entirety of the valley, and morning coffee or tea wake-up service is followed by a three-course breakfast on the veranda. "A bottle of good wine, like a good act, shines ever

in the retrospect," wrote **Robert Louis Stevenson**—and a sojourn at Poetry Inn lingers in the memory.

With its Provencal décor and landscaped rose gardens, **Maison Fleurie, \$\$\$\$\$**, offers a taste of French country charm in the heart of Yountville. Originally constructed in 1873 of stone from local quarries, its the oldest hotel in the Napa Valley—and, if you listen to the locals, its colorful history includes a period as a popular bordello.

Each morning, guests partake of Four Sisters Inns' signature breakfast buffet, which includes entrees like Grand Marnier French toast, artichoke quiche and other signature dishes from *The Kitchen Cookbook*. Fresh-baked cookies are offered daily, bicycles are available, and many rooms feature a fireplace for cool Napa evenings.

Situated amidst a vineyard at the edge of town, **Napa Valley Lodge, \$\$\$\$\$**, evokes a Tuscan villa complete with fountains, landscaped gardens and bocce ball court. The oversized rooms here also feature fireplaces and verandas; an outdoor fire pit adjoins the pool

courtyard. In keeping with Northern California's relaxed lifestyle, guests enjoy evening wine receptions and a complimentary Champagne breakfast served daily in Vintage Hall.

## NAPA'S CULINARY CAPITAL

One of the first things you notice while cruising around Yountville is the line outside **Bouchon Bakery, \$\$\$\$\$**, which recall the lines outside Manhattan's Magnolia Bakery during the heyday of *Sex and the City*. Next door, the Michelin-starred **Bouchon Bistro, \$\$\$\$\$**, replicates the charms of a Parisian bistro with such impeccable attention to detail that you might almost believe you've wandered into Benoit. Décor aside, what you eat and drink at Bouchon will be a reflection of **Thomas Keller's** seasonal, farm-to-table focus. Opened in 1998, Bouchon feels as romantic as a cherished Parisian memory.

When dining at **Redd, \$\$\$\$\$**, let the weather be your guide in determining whether to be seated in the olive-tree-shaded courtyard or to languish

like a film star in the minimalist dining room. Helmed by acclaimed chef **Richard Reddington**, the Michelin-starred restaurant opened in 2005 with a menu that reinterprets wine country cuisine with Asian, European and Mexican influences. A favorite of the film industry, Redd spawned a more casual Yountville sibling in 2012—a Napa-style pizzeria named **Redd Wood, \$\$\$\$\$**, that recalls Reddington's stint at Spago Beverly Hills.

Named for the matriarch of the Bardessono family, **Lucy Restaurant & Bar, \$\$\$\$\$**, practices a field-to-fork philosophy, utilizing produce from Lucy's Garden for artisanal cocktails and seasonal cuisine. The wine list offers a number of organic and biodynamic vintages, which can be enjoyed on the terrace or in the sleek dining room—or at Lucy's Garden Table surrounded by Persian lime trees and flowering herbs.

The flowers that infuse chocolatier **Chris Kollar's** lavender and fennel pollen truffles come from the certified organic **Jacobsen Orchards**, which is where Hill Family Estate offers a Secret Garden tour. A bucolic sanctuary hidden off the beaten

## ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

5 things you probably do at the airport that make you an @\$shole **By Stephan Horbelt**

### 1. DON'T BE A DRAG(ER)

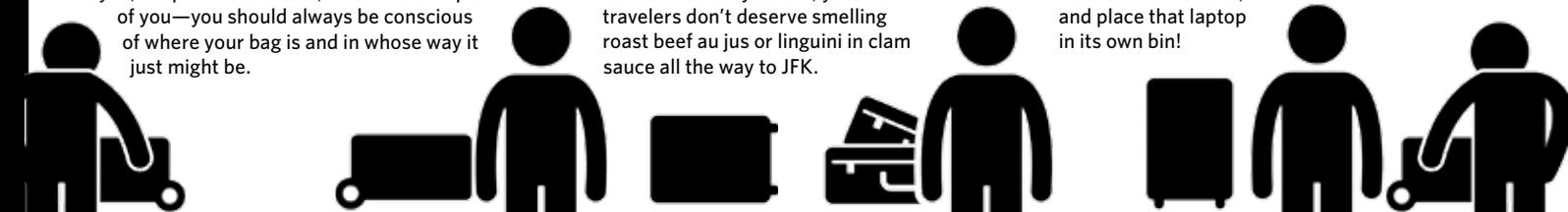
While I'm stoked that you've joined the rest of us in the 21st century by acquiring a bag on wheels, let's make sure you know how to walk with it. Please don't drag your luggage two feet behind you; keep it close. In fact, think of it as a part of you—you should always be conscious of where your bag is and in whose way it just might be.

### 2. WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

Hey, all you people in line at [insert overpriced airport restaurant here], don't even think about boxing up that warm meal and bringing it onto the plane! While you surely deserve a hearty dinner, your fellow travelers don't deserve smelling roast beef au jus or linguini in clam sauce all the way to JFK.

### 3. CHECKPOINT YOURSELF

Here's one that only applies to those who have traveled, say, *more than once in their life*. How do you not know how airport security works?! Take off those shoes before you get to the big radioactive machine, and place that laptop in its own bin!





Ma(i)sonry

track, Jacobsen Orchards is a verdant oasis less than five minutes from downtown Yountville. More than 120 varieties of fruit trees share an acre of land with hundreds of vegetables, herbs and culinary flowers, all of which are available to various chefs and restaurants who follow an honor harvest, leaving their names and amount on a clipboard pick list.

### WINE TASTINGS WITH ART

As it was in bohemian Paris, art and wine are natural companions throughout the Valley, with numerous tasting rooms offering curated galleries with the work of regional and national artists.

For the past two decades, **Jessup Cellars** ([jessupcellars.com](http://jessupcellars.com)) has been producing incredible single varietal wines and elegant blends, including the acclaimed Table for Four. Winemaker **Rob Lloyd** has a virtuoso's touch, blending wines notable for their silky tannins, rich complexity and elegant balance. Artist **Cynthia Carey** curates a series of rotating exhibitions at Jessup Cellars Gallery.

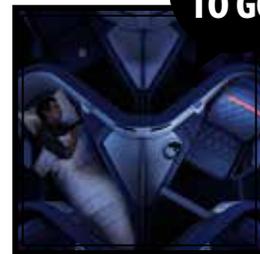
Across the street, wine collective

**Ma(i)sonry** offers curated flights of limited-production wines. Located in an immaculately restored stone manor house listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is part of Bespoke Collection, which offers artisanal brands and experiences from more than 20 small-production California wineries. Featured at Ma(i)sonry, Aereña Galleries & Gardens showcases the works of a broad range of mid-career artists, as well as vintage pieces by Eames, Louis Vuitton and others.

Notable for its sensual and supple Cabernets produced from an acclaimed winery in the prestigious Stags Leap District, **Cliff Lede Vineyards**, established in 2002, is also famous for designating all the vineyard blocks with the titles of classic rock 'n' roll songs such as "Hotel California" and "Purple Haze." Guests are urged to recreate the Beatles' iconic *Abbey Road* album cover in front of the vineyard's own impeccably reproduced *Abbey Road* signage. The 60-acre property is a veritable contemporary art museum with pieces from the proprietor's vast collection dotting the estate.

If you follow the tree-lined drive to the California Veterans Home (one of the most bucolic sanctuaries available for American military veterans), you'll come upon the restored **Lincoln Theater** as well as **Napa Valley Museum**. Founded in 1972, the museum moved in 1998 to Yountville to a boldly designed building honoring the county's agricultural roots. Inside are three galleries dedicated to rotating exhibitions, local artists and local history, as well as a permanent exhibition showcasing the Valley's geological and cultural history and its evolution into one of the premier wine-growing regions of the world. ■

GOOD TO GO



You'll be traveling in one of the most exclusive cabins in the sky when you opt for the new **Delta One** experience, which comes with complimentary Sky Club access, a stellar menu, flat-bed seats and other luxe amenities. Travel to Europe in November-December and take advantage of special fares starting at \$2,157 round trip from JFK. [delta.com](http://delta.com)

1920s hotel-turned-spa **The Oaks at Ojai** has added nearly 20 theme weeks and weekends to its calendar. Rates start at just \$250 per person and include accommodations, fitness classes, meals, wifi and parking. Hike 50 miles in five days, Nov. 29 - Dec. 4, as part of the "Into the Wild Hiking Week" package. [oaksspa.com](http://oaksspa.com)

**Hyatt Palm Springs** is offering a "Buy 2 Nights, Get the 3rd Night Free" package (book by Sept. 15) that is perfect for the overworked Angeleno craving an extended weekend desert getaway. Call to book, or go online and use the code 55110. [palm Springs.hyatt.com](http://palm Springs.hyatt.com)

FOLSOM: SFSTATION

## ACROSS THE GLOBE



### MATINEE SAN DIEGO Sept. 4-7

Head south for Labor Day to frolic poolside and dance up a storm at eight big events. Friday's huge opening party takes place at Rich's, with pool parties throughout the weekend at host hotel The Lafayette, and a Sunday main event at the Mission Bay Waterfront's Nautilus Pavilion. [matineesandiego.com](http://matineesandiego.com)

### UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL Sept. 19-20

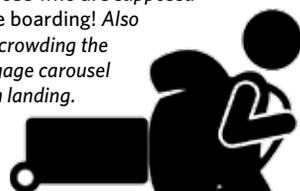
The ninth annual Sydney fest aims to rid films of complacency and revitalize real enthusiasm. We're excited for bloody spoof *Dude Bro Party Massacre III*, the **Henry Rollins**-starring *He Never Died* and a 20-year-later screening of **Larry Clark's Kids**. [suff.com.au](http://suff.com.au)

### FOLSOM STREET FAIR Sept. 25-27

The world's biggest leather event returns to San Francisco, and while the main event is on Sunday, it's a full weekend of debauchery. Catch live shows on the festivals' stages, meander to find your own brand of trouble, or hit up Magnitude, the big dance party. [folsomstreetfair.com](http://folsomstreetfair.com)

### 4. WAIT YOUR GD TURN!

I'm pretty sure it says right on your ticket which group you'll board the plane with. Didn't hear whether Group C is ready to board? Ask a fellow traveler. Everyone's going to the same place, so there's no need to rush the gate and stand in the way of those who are *supposed* to be boarding! Also see: *crowding the baggage carousel upon landing.*



### 5. MOVE YA ASS!

Moving walkways (you know, those flat escalators) are surely a sign that the world of *The Jetsons* is nigh. Unfortunately, some people still don't know the protocol: if you've got all the time in the world and aren't rushing to a flight, meaning you're going to stand on the walkway and relax, move to the right-hand side. Let your fellow travelers who are in a hurry sail right past you to the left, and the airport will be a much more friendly place! ■

