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Tasting with the Napa Wine Project

by [Lisa Ellen Niver](#)

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Please enjoy this Guest Post from Dave at [Dave's Travel Corner](#):

Thanks to George and Lisa for this guest post!

I first met them early this year at a travel blogging event at the Biltmore in downtown and have since been to several of their events including the very well attended Meet Plan Go event last month where I poured wines from smaller Napa producers.

Nearly 6 years ago I started the Napa Wine Project. I wanted to create a unique project on a large scale and decided to try and review all wineries in Napa by personally visiting them, meeting the owners and tasting the wines. I chose Napa because of its excellent International reputation and its wine regions are fairly well defined along a small valley surrounded by hillsides. Of course, when I started the project - I didn't realize there are approximately 900 producers making wine commercially in the Napa Valley!

Over time I have explored many of the off the beaten path wineries, individual appellations (wine regions within Napa Valley), met with some very interesting people from all walks of life, tasted some stellar wines and certainly increased my own knowledge of all aspects of the wine industry. In the process I hope I've created a resource that is valuable for both consumers and the trade.

My goal is still the same, and six years later I am a bit closer to reaching it - I've now visited the winery (or with a representative if there is no physical winery), tasted the wines and written reviews of over 670 commercial wine producers/wineries in Napa (including a number that have moved out of Napa or gone out of business in the last six years). Look for my 700th review sometime in early to mid 2012!

The Napa Valley sometimes gets a bad rap for being too high class or pretentious - but nothing could be further from the truth - especially if you take some time to explore this beautiful region. There are a few larger wineries that get much of the publicity - but by numbers, 95% of the producers in the Napa Valley are small (under 1000 cases) and are family owned.

There is a section of the Napa Valley along Highway 29 that locals sometimes refer to as "the wine strip"- this is the most visited winery part of the valley (larger tasting rooms, better known wineries) and on a busy summer weekend traffic can stack up significantly along the highway at certain times of the day. In addition, some of the more popular tasting rooms here might have lines around the bar just to taste their wines.

There are well less than 100 wineries in Napa that do not require appointments and you can just walk in during their normal business hours. By numbers, most of the wineries in Napa require advance appointments. For more personalized experiences, I highly recommend making appointments at some of these smaller wineries. Often you can visit with the owner or winemaker and learn more about the entire process of making wine. Or if you want to visit the larger wineries, consider visiting during the winter season or during the middle of the week for fewer crowds.

Napa Valley produces only about 4% of the state of California's entire wine production. Quality is paramount here rather than quantity. Vintners continue to strive to improve the quality of each

vintage. And as most winemakers will tell you, "80% of winemaking is conducted in the vineyard."

The winemaking community refreshingly is an environment where information is shared, rather than guarded. Winemakers as a whole are willing to discuss how they make wine and answer a variety of questions about the industry.

I'm always happy to answer any questions or provide winery recommendations for this special region. You can contact me at: @davedtc,

www.facebook.com/davestravelcorner, www.napawineproject.com or

www.davestravelcorner.com

From Lisa and George, We Said Go Travel:

We appreciated Dave's participation in our October Travel event and are so happy to host his guest post this week on our blog.

Thank you to Dave!!

We hope to see you Nov 29 at X-Bar in Century City for our next event, "Travel with Technology: My favorite Travel app!" Meet the founders of Ship Mate! More travel news and stories from us next week. Want more right now? go to: www.wesaidgotravel.com