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Nov 20 2011

# Harvest at Tedeschi Family Winery — Calistoga, Napa Valley, California

A couple of weeks ago, my friend Dave Thompson invited me to join him to help with harvest season in wine country Napa Valley in Northern California. Dave started [The Napa Wine Project](#), in which he is personally visiting, tasting and reviewing every winery and commercial wine producer in Napa Valley. He has visited more than 680 wineries to date of approximately 900. Dave is also a travel writer and the founder of an international travel community called [Dave's Travel Corner](#).

I have asked Dave to be my guest blogger for the winery we visited in Calistoga — [Tedeschi Family Winery](#). Below is his write-up, along with photos and captions from me.



[Tedeschi Family Winery](#) is one of those throwback wineries located in the less traveled north part of the Napa Valley. There are less of everything here – cars, people, and wineries. When I tour people in Napa and take them to Calistoga, they are often surprised by just how rural it can be here. While relatively not far from the much more heavily visited “wine strip” between Oakville and St. Helena on Highway 29, this part of the Napa Valley feels much more remote.



© MICHELLE YAM



The winery is run by long time Napa Vintner Emil Tedeschi and his two sons, Emilio and Mario. This is truly a small family run operation. Their total annual production of wine is merely 300 cases, making this winery one of the smaller producers in Napa. Emil's parents came to the Napa Valley in 1919, which turned out to be a less than desirable time to get into the wine industry commercially as [Prohibition](#) was just starting. During Prohibition, it was legal to make a maximum of 200 gallons of home wine per person, so there never was a shortage of wine around the Tedeschi household.

Emil was never formally trained in winemaking. Rather, like a number of long time vintners, he picked up winemaking from his family. In 1974, he co-founded Maui's only winery and ran that for a number of years. The focus there was on pineapple wine. The focus here in Calistoga is on limited production hand-crafted Cabernet Sauvignon.

Emil with his two sons, Mario (left) and Emilio (right).

Emil ages his wines longer than many wineries. This style helps soften the wine and makes it more approachable upon release. His wines are a throwback, if you will, to an era when alcohol

levels were lower in the valley, and wines represented specific vineyards and were balanced with decent acidity making them food friendly. Oh, and he's kept his prices affordable by Napa standards.

With such a small production, his wines have fairly limited distribution. They are available locally in Napa at a number of fine restaurants.

Today, Tedeschi welcomes visitors by appointment. Enjoy a wine visit with Emil or his children, taste the wines and tour the small winery. If the weather is warm, who knows, you might end up relaxing in one of his hammocks strung between his vineyard rows!

Grapes harvested and loaded on the truck and ready for the crusher.

A worker emptying the bins of grapes into the crusher.

The destemmer removes the stems from the grapes into a separate bin. This will be used for compost.

The grapes after going through the crusher.

I got to sample the juice straight out of the crusher. So sweet!

Dave and Mario working hard.

Emil doing the wine punch down in the cellar. Punching down is a process done to keep the wine and skins mixed up during fermentation to help increase the extraction of color and flavor.

Dave has become really good friends with Emil and often comes to the winery to help out.

A close-up of the wine punch down tool.

Emil gave me a glass of grape juice that had been cold soaking for a few days. Refreshingly sweet and delicious.

A huge thanks to Dave for hosting me and introducing me to the Tedeschi family. And thanks to Emil for showing me around his beautiful and charming winery. I had a great time learning about winemaking and look forward to another visit in the future.

[Tedeschi Family Winery](#)

2779 Grant Street ([map](#))

Calistoga, CA 94515

(707) 337-5526



[Rease](#) - November 21, 2011 - 7:17 am

This winery looks divine. Great photos Michelle! How pricey is this wine? I imagine if they don't distribute it much it must be a little higher in price.



[Cathy Sweeney](#) - November 21, 2011 - 8:35 am

Wonderful photos and post, Michelle and Dave. How fun to taste the juice right out of the crusher! I really enjoyed my visit to Tedeschi Winery and meeting Emil, too. I got to do some "tucking" of the vines. The vineyards are lovely and I love Emil's style of wine production. I hope to visit there again sometime soon, especially after reading your post!



[Christy @ Ordinary Traveler](#) - November 21, 2011 - 12:43 pm

Great photos! You really got the red carpet tour!



[Bill Butler](#) - November 21, 2011 - 3:01 pm

It is nice to see a small winery still in operation. Thanks for sharing the great pictures and story.



[Casey](#) - November 21, 2011 - 9:12 pm

Beautiful Photography Michelle, Plus another check off the Bucket List – Good for you!



[Dave](#) - November 21, 2011 - 9:29 pm

Thanks for the making the long trek up north Michelle – love the photos 😊 You should see the valley now – its a patchwork quilt of brilliant yellows, oranges and reds. The first major frost will turn this color explosion to grey in a matter of hours.

You've captured well the essence of Tedeschi's tiny vineyard and the flurry of activity during harvest.



[A.Barlow](#) - November 22, 2011 - 2:27 pm

Those are some awesome images. Really love that first image of the grapes. Makes me want a glass of wine now 😊



Michelle -- my. Traveling Lens - November 22, 2011 - 7:45 pm

Thank you all for your comments!

Rease – I believe the price ranges between \$36-\$70.

Dave – Amazing how just a couple of weeks can make such a big difference in the landscape this time of year. Thank you again for taking me!

– Michelle



Eugenie - November 25, 2011 - 12:45 am

Great Pictures and story. I am happy that someone is paying attention to the smaller wineries. Congratulations to Emil and his sons!  
You guys did it!

