

The Glory of Napa's Grapes: Guest Blogger David Thompson

November 28th, 2011 by Caleb Pirtle III

The Napa Valley encompasses a rather small geographical area, produces only four percent of California's entire wine production and is one of the oldest wine producing regions in the world, dating back from 1861. The valley itself is only thirty miles long and several miles wide. However there is a huge range of micro-climates, temperatures, elevations, and soil types.



David Thompson founded the Napa Wine Project

The southern part of the valley is close to the cooling influences of the San Pablo Bay (fog and wind) and dictates the types of varietals grown here. White varietals are grown here – including Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio – and red varietals are grown here – including Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Two primary mountain ranges run the length of the valley – the Vaca range on the eastern side of the valley and the Mayacamas range on the western side.

Vineyard elevations range from next to sea level to about 2,400 feet. This small wine region is world famous for the quality of wines it produces.

It is sometimes rare to have premium restaurants in a rural region, but the Napa Valley is also well known for its top restaurants, in 2011 boasting 15 Michelin stars.

Napa is home to approximately 420 physical bonded wineries and another approximately 450 virtual wineries (wineries that make their wine at a different location).

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 look at the numbers, ninety-five percent of the producers in the Napa Valley are small (under 1000 cases) and are family owned.

You can visit the Napa Valley anytime of the year (wineries stay open year round). However, I recommend visiting in Spring or Fall. Fall is a fun

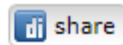
There is an air of excitement in the Napa area that you can only have during harvest time; loaded trucks with bins of grapes are flying down the road, the unmistakable odor of yeast, enology & viticulture consultants find that their cell phones are invariably an extension of their head, and around the wineries

During Spring, in the middle of the week, everything is green, bud break has already occurred, the grapes are leafing out, the summer crowds have not yet arrived.

Nearly six years ago, I started the Napa Wine Project – www.napawineproject.com. I wanted to create a unique project on a large scale and decided to explore the world of wine (670+ visits, tastings & reviews to date).

I chose Napa because of its excellent International reputation and its wine regions are fairly easy to understand as they are well defined along a small valley floor.

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, and learned many aspects of the wine industry. In the process I hope I've created a resource that is valuable for both consumers and the trade.



- <http://www.facebook.com/jack.durish> Jack Durish

My wife and I celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in Napa. We stayed at a wonderful B&B located on a ridge overlooking the valley floor. Touring the wineries and sampling their vintages consumed many pleasant hours. I cannot recommend a sojourn there too highly.

- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
- [CONTACT](#)
- [STORE](#)

- [facebook](#)
- [twitter](#)
- [linkedin](#)
- [rss](#)

THE TRAVELER'S

- [BLOG](#)
 - [Frank C. Etier](#)
 - [Whit Gentry](#)
 - [Maryann Miller](#)
 - [Don Newbury](#)
 - [Caleb Pirtle III](#)
 - [Don Rush](#)