

Napa - Sonoma Tasting Summary – Oct/Nov 2022

Vineyard	Wine	Exper	Purchases	Comments
Markham (Napa)	★★★½	★★★½	2020 Frenchmen's Blend 2020 Rose of Pinot Noir 2016 Cabernet 2018 Yountville Ranch Merlot	Markham has been around since the 1800s and the stone wine cellar building built in 1879 is still at the center of their complex. They have been a long-time premier Merlot house and it was one of the wineries we visited on our first trip to Napa in the '90s. We still buy their Merlots from time to time and they are consistently good. We were in the north end of the valley and decided to stop in. Everything we tasted was excellent including reds, whites, and the rose. By Napa standards their wines are quite affordable. It made perfect sense to join their wine club, and we did.
Rombauer (Napa)	★★★	★★★	2021 Carneros Chardonnay 2019 Napa Valley Merlot 2020 California Zinfandel	They have been known for their chardonnays for a long time and we've never tasted their other wines before. Their tasting area is fabulous. It has awesome segregated tables in the woods and has a vineyard view to die for. We were walk-ins and ended up in a tasting area more like fast food, but that was to be expected. It wasn't surprising that the chard is just about perfect, but we didn't expect the reds to be outstanding.
Tank Garage (Napa)	★★★	★★★½	2019 Make Money Cabernet 2020 Honky Tonk Girl Red 2021 Checkered Past Red 2021 I've Chosen Disco Zin	The attraction of "The Tank" was its weirdness. Blogs and Google searches for "unusual wines" touted them for their bizarre blends using obscure grapes. We were in search of new wine experiences and this one certainly fit the bill. Their tasting room is in an old gas station on the main road in Calistoga. We sat at the bar and had the full attention of one of their senior people. He kept pouring strange blend after strange blend. Each was dramatically different than the one before it and each was delicious. Several wines were made of grapes we'd never heard of. Their approach is to make different wines with different grapes from different vineyards every year. Sometimes they make 20 cases, sometimes they make a 500 cases. When a wine is sold out, it is gone forever. Despite a nagging doubt that we were losing our minds, we joined their club.

Wine - quality of the wines. **Food**: quality of the food. **Exper** - tasting experience including server, ambience, food, time taken, facilities.

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Whitehall Lane (Napa)	★★★½	★★★★	Deferred to wine club shipment	Whitehall is a small-to-medium size winery that makes about 50k cases a year. They make a very nice Pinot and Merlot, but Cabernets are their focus. They have a half dozen Cabs that are sourced from a variety of vineyards in the north end of the valley. Each one was outstanding, with the best going for big bucks, albeit at half the price of most other Napa Cabernet wineries. Their "house" Cab was excellent, affordable, and is their biggest seller. To sum it up: everything we tasted was excellent, they have great (for Napa) prices on all the standard grapes. Yet again, we joined their club.
Mueller (Sonoma)	★★★½	★★★★	2015 Old Vine Zin	Mueller is primarily a Pinot house and an excellent one at that. They produce nice Chardonnays and Zinfandels, but their Pinots are king. We've been a member of the Mueller club for about fifteen years and this visit was essentially a social call with Bob Mueller (owner and winemaker) with a bit of wine tasting. He's used the same vineyards and same methods over the years and consequently, they have been consistently great. They didn't have a lot of wine left to sell as the fires of 2020 killed off their entire harvest, but the 2021s are close to release. He had a few bottles of Zin in their library, so we bought them.
Hartford Court (Sonoma)	★★★	★★★	2019 Fanucchi-Wood Road Zin 2019 Marin County Pinot	Like Mueller, they were short on inventory due to the 2020 fires. We tasted a few Chards and a couple of Pinots that were quite good, but also quite expensive. The exclusion of Zinfandels was a bit disappointing because their Zins have been outstanding over the last decade. They had a few bottles left to sell and we scooped one up without tasting it.
Jeff Cohn (Sonoma)	★★★½	★★★	2018 The First Date white 2018 Stagecoach Viognier 2018 Iron Hill Zin	We were fortunate to be the only people in the room and our host served us most of their current offerings. The reds included a GSM, Zin, Syrah, and Petite Syrah. All were excellent, but the biggest surprise was the Viognier and the other Rhone whites. The Viognier was the best we'd ever had. As we were checking out, Jeff Cohn, the owner and wine maker, came in the door and chatted for a while with us. He grabbed a bottle of the 2021 upcoming Viognier release, poured a glass for Suzanne, and insisted that we try it. As we now expected, it was awesome.

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Dry Creek (Sonoma)	★★★½	★★★½	2018 Somers Ranch Zin 2019 DCV7 Wallace Ranch Zin 2019 Vogensen Ranch Zin 2019 Old Vine Zin 2019 Beeson Ranch Zin	The Dry Creek Heritage Zin has been a great value wine for the past several years and can be found in most wine stores. Their smaller production wines have recently received a lot of positive press and ratings and now we know why. They make a dozen or so different Zinfandels from all over Sonoma Valley from varying soils and micro-climates. The wines span the spectrum from light to full-bodied. They were all outstanding and very reasonably priced. Given that, we joined their club.
Ridge (Sonoma)	★★½	★★½	2020 Pagani Ranch Zin 2020 Geyserville Zin 2019 Lytton Estate Petite Sirah	Our tasting at Ridge was a bit disappointing. They've been on a winning streak with great ratings on a wide variety of reds with a focus on Zinfandels. Sadly, they only poured two Zins and the other wines were somewhat pedestrian. They had a nice Cabernet, but like nearly every winery we went to in Napa and Sonoma, it was overly expensive. We bought the best of what we tasted, but the experience felt like an "opportunity lost".
Foppiano (Sonoma)	★★★½	★★★½	2019 1896 Red Blend 2018 Estate Pinot 2018 Grant Station Carignane 2018 Estate Zin 2018 Nonno's Block Zin 2019 Estate Petite Sirah	Foppiano was the surprise of Sonoma. It has a small and very modest tasting room and there was only one other couple there when we were. After 125 years, they are still family owned and run. Our server poured us just about everything they have. The surprise was the depth of their wine lineup and just how good they all were. In addition to excellent Zins and Petite Sirahs, they have a good Pinot, tasty blends, and an outstanding (and unusual) Carignane. To top it off, they had the best prices of all the Sonoma wineries we visited.

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