

7x7SF

Four Wineries With Incredible Food in Napa And Sonoma



at Ram's Gate

Thanks to some seriously deranged laws, most wineries in **Wine Country** are not allowed to serve real food. Hence, the stale crackers and sweaty cheese that constitutes most “food and wine pairings.” It makes little sense considering that wine is most often enjoyed as part of a meal. Thankfully, if there’s a will, there’s a way—and these wineries have found a way to bring their food and wine together under one roof.

When industry veteran Jeff O’Neill built [Ram’s Gate](#), which opened late last fall, he had more in mind than simply a tasting room to showcase his Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. He wanted to create the perfect tasting experience, one in which food plays a central role (just as it does in life). While there are many rooms in this spacious **Howard Backen**-designed wonderland, the kitchen is at the center. A large community table surrounded by shelves of cookbooks (O’Neill has over 300) serves not only as a place to enjoy Chef Jason Rose’s “ego-less, wine forward cooking,” as he describes it, but also as a classroom. In February, O’Neill hosted Ryan Farr from **4505 Meats** for a butchery demonstration, during which Farr talked about how the pig was raised, what it ate, and why certain meat is healthier than other meat.

The 19-item menu is served at the many patio tables or can be packed as a picnic for you to enjoy on the lawn. And did I mention they make a sparkling wine?

28700 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, 707-721-8700

Founded in 1890 by two brothers from Tuscany (Guiseppe and Pietro), [Simi Winery](#) is celebrated as the oldest continually operating winery in Sonoma County. More importantly, they make pizza. The brick, wood-burning oven turns out pies on the weekends throughout the summer and Eric Lee, a CIA alum and the house chef also prepares salads and antipasti, always with the wine in mind. Best known for their Alexander Valley Cabernet, Simi also makes Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, which are available by the glass– because nothing is more frustrating than trying to enjoy your meal with a two-ounce pour.

16275 Healdsburg Avenue, 1-800-746-4880

While a tasting at the bar will earn you a few nuts and nibbles, The Farm to Table Experience at [Robert Sinskey Winery](#) (limited to eight people a day) is the real deal. Tour the biodynamically farmed garden where all the food you will eat that day is grown, before sitting down to lunch and a flight of Sinskey wine (his Pinot Noir is one of the best in Napa, in my opinion). Maria Helm Sinskey, besides being married to Robert, is a world-renowned chef who has worked in Michelin-starred kitchens and published two cookbooks. You're in good hands.

6320 Silverado Trail, Napa, 707-944-9090

Yes, we're cheating a bit here, but in the spirit of things, the wine of **Long Meadow Ranch and the Farmstead restaurant** is the closest you will get to a winery with a fully operating restaurant in Napa Valley (besides Domaine Chandon and Etoile, of course). Long Meadow, a 650-acre ranch high atop the Mayacamas Mountain range supplies the St. Helena restaurant with beef, olive oil, vegetables and, of course, wine. Chef Stephen Barber's comfortable farmhouse fare works well the straight-forward reasonably priced wines (including a Sauvignon Blanc on tap). Lunch or dinner earns you tokens for a free tastings at the adjacent tasting room.

738 Main Street, St. Helena, 707-963-9181