



SAMPLING ST. HELENA

*The Napa Valley town features famous wineries,
gourmet dining, and hickory club shafts.*

By Sarah Lunsford



COURTESY OF MEADOWOOD NAPA VALLEY

(Left) Golfers can choose to play with hickory shafted clubs and gutta-percha balls at Meadowood Napa Valley's 9-hole executive course. photo "Courtesy of Meadowood Napa Valley". (Below) Former Notre Dame and NFL quarterback Rick Mirer has found success in the wine world with his Mirror Wine Company in St. Helena.

With a multitude of wineries calling St. Helena home, a visit will give you a sampling of the world famous wines made by creative and talented wine-makers.

A short drive outside of town, Brown Estate is a family-owned winery with a three decade history of farming in the area. Fifty acres of vineyards are planted among 450-acres of what the family calls, "roughneck wilderness." In 1995 they began making wine under their own label, starting out with a Zinfandel, and expanded their wine offerings from there. Friendly and relaxed, Brown is a must-see winery with a 7,000 square



Many wine regions call California home, but the one that typically comes to mind first is the Napa Valley. Just north of San Francisco, the area is home to historic wineries and towns that run along Highway 29. One of those towns, St. Helena, was founded near what is considered California's first hot springs resort, White Sulphur Springs. In 1854, J. Henry Still of England, purchased 126-acres near the springs where he built a house and general store before offering lots to anyone who wanted to help him start a town.



COURTESY OF MEADOWOOD NAPA VALLEY

(Left) The tasting room at Bello Family Vineyards is one of the new hot spots in St. Helena. **(Above)** Meadowood Napa Valley is one of Travel & Leisure magazine's Top 500 places to stay in the world.

foot subterranean wine cave. Just make sure you call ahead of time, because visits are by appointment.

Just south of town is the Napa Wine Company, where you can taste a variety of wines from boutique wineries in the area including St. Helena's Mirror Wine Company, founded by former NFL player Rick Mirer. Mirror Wine Company was so named because the winery's first two Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards "mirror" one another across the Napa Valley. Mirror's first release was a 2008 Cabernet made with fruit from both vineyards by winemaker Rob Lawson, who has deep roots in the area. Since then, Mirror has added to its wine list and actively supports children's charities with special promotions.

Among the many tasting rooms in St. Helena, Bello Family Vineyards Winery is an experience in the fantastical. Unique contemporary décor accentuated with Victorian red, and a tasting bar in the round complement a wine list that includes a Cabernet Sauvignon named for owner Michael Bello's champion racehorse, Megahertz. Bello's winemaker, Aaron Pott, Food & Wine's 2012

Winemaker of the Year, puts his creative stamp on Bello's wines, including a 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon that received a 94+ from Wine Advocate.

History and culinary delight can be found at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. This renowned culinary school calls the 1889 Greystone Manor home, offering classes in all things culinary there. For a taste of what the Institute has to offer, you can eat at the Wine Spectator Greystone Restaurant, or just experience the sensory reality of a chef at the Flavor Bar, where you'll receive insight into the use of flavor in enhancing food.

St. Helena isn't only home to perfectly blended wines and foods. The town's lodging options give you a choice of the historic, the modern, and everything in between.

Meadowood Napa Valley, a 250-acre estate that has become the home away from home for discerning travelers, was once a private country club in the hills. The resort gives you a wide choice of overnight accommodations, a 3-star Michelin rated restaurant led by Chef Christopher Kostow, and many activities to keep you enjoyably occupied. The resort is no stranger to high praise, including a spot in Travel & Leisure's top 500 places to stay in the world.

The resort is home to a 9-hole executive golf course designed by Jack Fleming,

who worked with Alister MacKenzie, designer of the Augusta National course. Meadowood is a private course, but guests can call for playing privileges. Players can choose to use hickory clubs and gutta-percha golf balls, retro equipment which makes stepping onto the course like stepping back to a bygone era of golf.

Golf isn't the only sport at the resort. Tennis, croquet, swimming, biking, and hiking area also offered. Hiking is a great way to experience the area's natural terrain, along with the challenge of spotting one of the 106 bird species that have been identified there. The Labyrinth trail can be a bit challenging, but its panoramic views of the valley's vineyards and other sights make it well worth the effort.

Private tours are a great way to see the area. These can be tailored to your tastes, including tours showcasing specific types of wines, destination spots to see, and restaurants you won't want to miss. A historic spot you won't want to miss is the Old Grist Bale Mill, a water powered mill built in 1846 that includes a 36-foot water wheel. A tour of the property will take you back to a time when a variety of crops were grown in the Napa Valley and settlers gathered at the mill to grind the corn and wheat.

With deep roots in history, wine, good food and interesting destinations, St. Helena is a must see when you're in the Napa Valley.