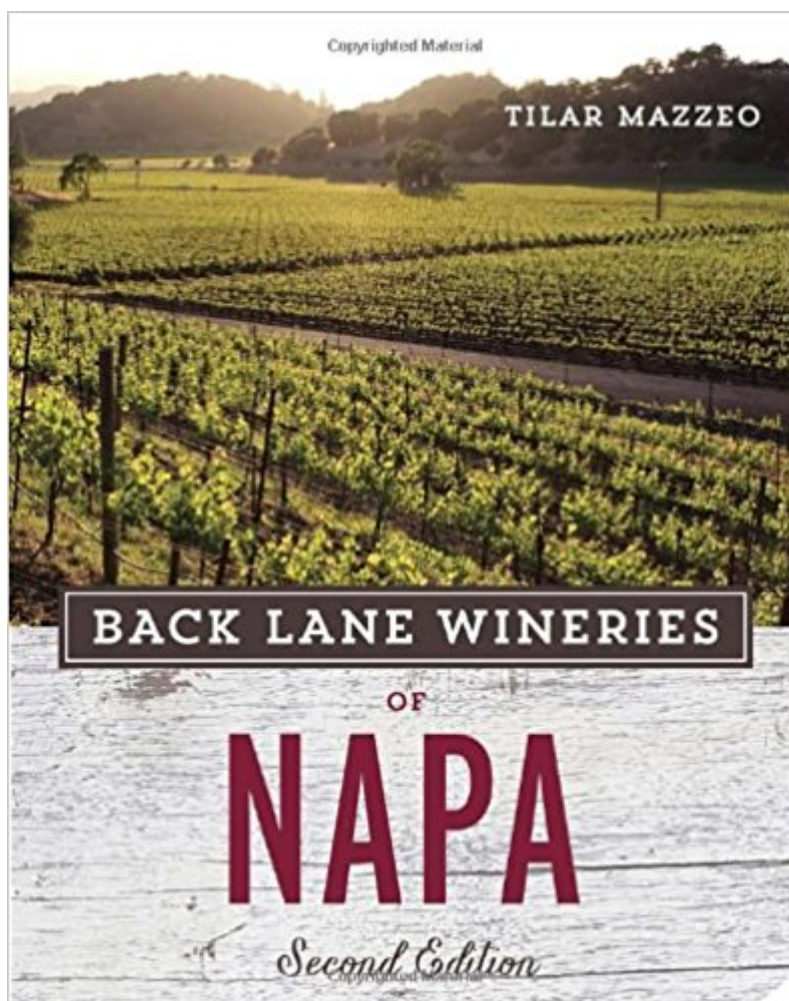


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Back Lane Wineries Of Napa, Second Edition



Synopsis

This updated guide to the small and "secret" back-lane wineries and tasting rooms of Napa profiles over 70 hard-to-find, authentic boutique estates that feature world-class, artisanal wines revered by locals and critics. Beyond the crowded tasting rooms of Napa's popular wineries, there's an authentic, welcoming side of the valley waiting to be explored: boutique estates run by passionate winemakers who handcraft world-class wines. Back Lane Wineries of Napa uncovers more than seventy of these gems that locals and critics revere but few visitors ever see. Updated with new wineries, restaurants, and local attractions; maps; full-color photographs; and tips on wine-tasting etiquette, wine shipping services, and itinerary planning, this guide will prepare oenophiles and beginning wine-lovers alike to live the good life in Napa style.

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Customer Reviews

TILAR MAZZEO is a New York Times best-selling author of books on wine, travel, French culture, and luxury, including The Widow Clicquot, The Secret of Chanel No. 5, The Back Lane Wineries of Sonoma, and the forthcoming The Ritz at War: Luxury in Occupied Paris. She is also the co-owner of the online wine business LaLaWines.com and professor of English at Colby College.

Introduction The reputation of the Napa Valley is the stuff of legend, and the making of the California

wine country is a story with enough drama and intrigue to support more than a handful of bestselling accounts of its rise to international prominence. Since the famous face-off in the 1976 so-called "Judgment of Paris" where Napa Valley Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon wines beat out renowned French competitors in blind tests there has been no doubt that this relatively small corner of the wine world has garnered a big reputation. Consider, after all, that the Napa Valley produces less than five percent of the total wine production in the state of California. Or that it has fewer than fifty thousand acres planted to vineyards. Bordeaux has more than five times that amount, and, yet, devoted aficionados of Napa Valley wines will argue that their reputations are not all that different. The result of all this celebrity and acclaim is more than just great wines. It also means tourism. Each year, nearly five million visitors travel to the Napa Valley wine country from around the world. Most of these visitors travel along what the locals call "the loop" the well-trodden tasting route that takes eager enthusiasts up the Silverado Trail and back down the St. Helena Highway (or vice versa), past some of America's most famous and most familiar wineries. Along the way, there are picturesque fields of blazing mustard blooms, ready gourmet pleasures, and a little taste of the good life, Napa style. If what you want is a weekend (or more) of incomparable luxury, you'll have no trouble finding it here in the wine country, and you won't need a travel guide if what you want to do is visit the celebrated commercial wineries of the Napa Valley. It's hard to miss them. Many tasting rooms are slick retail operations run by corporate managers living somewhere a long way from Napa, offering wines that you can buy just as readily (and often less expensively) on the shelves of your local grocery store, and big signs along the highway will show you the way. Often, these are beautiful places, and I am not recommending that you pass them by entirely. A part of the California wine tasting experience is sitting on marbled Italianate terraces overlooking acres of perfectly pruned vineyards, basking in the warm sun and the intense loveliness of it all. For some, as exquisite as it all is, there is also a whispered complaint. To certain sensibilities, it's just possible that this aspect of Napa is a bit more like Disneyland than anyone would like. The largest corporate wineries crank out more than eight million cases of wine a year, and the hillsides are dotted with mansions that you can tell even from a distance are monstrously huge. It's all too easy to get the impression that Napa is big business by day and elite charity events by night the kind of place where the idle super-rich, weighed down by all those diamonds, struggle to lift that \$100 glass of hillside cabernet. And sometimes there is the perception that only heaven can help the poor novice who wanders off the beaten tourist track. At least there on the main tourist trail, lost in a crowd, you can slink away silently when the experts start in on

some competitive and very expensive appreciation. These are some of the enduring stereotypes of Napa—maybe even part of the marketing in some corners of the valley. But nothing could be farther from the heart and soul of this region. The other side of the wine country, and by far the larger side, is surprisingly genuine, low-key, and embracing, a place where enthusiastic amateurs are everyone's favorite people and where you can spend a long afternoon tromping the vineyards with a small proprietor who is only too happy to share with you his or her little piece of paradise for a remarkably modest tasting fee—and sometimes without charging at all. Out there in the fields or up in the tasting room, you'll hear time and time again the story of how one winemaker or another came to this verdant valley, fell in love with it, and found the course of life irrevocably altered. Everywhere in Napa there are people of passion who have made their life's work crafting a beautiful wine. Here in the wine country, there are also more than a few families who have farmed these ranches for decades and can still remember a time when most of this valley was planted not to grapes but to fruit orchards. These are folks with deep community ties and pioneering histories—and part of what they helped pioneer was that special way of life in the wine country that still has the power to enchant so many of those who come to visit. It's only along the back lanes that you'll get to hear those kinds of stories, and, because many of these wines aren't widely distributed, it's also only along the back lanes that you'll get a chance to try them. They are, as often as not, world-class wines that locals and industry insiders revere but that few consumers will ever encounter in a wine shop. Without the pressures of large-scale commercialization, these are also the cellars where old varietals can be preserved or new experiments in shaping the future of enology can be put to the test. These small outfits won't have big advertising budgets or well-posted tasting rooms along the major thoroughfares—and they don't want them either. So the trouble for a newcomer to the Napa Valley is where to start looking. This is a guide to those back lane wineries of Napa, places where you can find excellent handcrafted wines made by on-site proprietors, often with only a local or regional distribution and with a limited case production. With only a handful of exceptions, the wineries included in this book make fewer than ten thousand cases of wine a year, and the smallest produce only a hundred or so. Those larger exceptions are wineries that are so much a part of the heart and soul of Napa's history that I couldn't bear to exclude them, and their case productions still number only in the tens of thousands. In a county where some of the big commercial operations churn out millions of cases of wine a year, this is still a small operation. Off the beaten path there are few marble terraces or stucco palaces, but often these wineries are in the midst of striking beauty—overlooking a hundred acres of a

wildlife preserve far above the fog-lined valley floor, on the edge of an ancient redwood forest, or tucked along a rural side road in the middle of open fields, where the proprietors are happy to watch you settle down for a picnic with a bottle or two of wine.Â Â Best of all, in my mind, these are places where wine tasting gets down to earth. Here, no one needs to show off how developed his or her palate is, and the winemakers welcome questions from beginners and experts alike. Above all, these are wines that are likely to be a new experience, with names that you won't find in big retail outlets back home. Amid the back lane wineries of Napa, you can still make secret discoveries.

I live an hour from NAPA. Nice to know of the MANY wineries off the "beaten path" with exception of the fact 9 out of 10 he lists are tasting by appointment only. Even during Harvest Season - does not bode well for tourism. Further? You can get far more information free from the Napa Valley Winegrower's Association than what is contained in this book. I was/am? VERY disappointed. Even Triple AAA has more comprehensive information.

Found the book very useful, organized and can't wait to try the recommendations this summer.

Not a lot of new things in this book although I did find a few that I want to try.

Very insightful information that helped us to find the perfect small boutique wineries that we love to visit!

Perfect for my wine enthusiast daughter

Disappointed in this book. You can get all the same information by getting a good map and reviewing the places yourself.

Great condition, on time and perfect to for those wine tastings that aren't like cattle call.

Very helpful!

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