

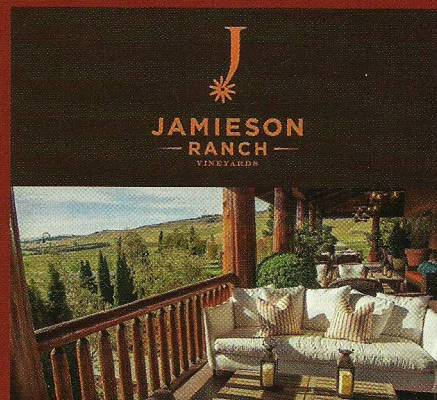
FREE

OCTOBER 18, 2013

# WINE COUNTRY

*This Week*

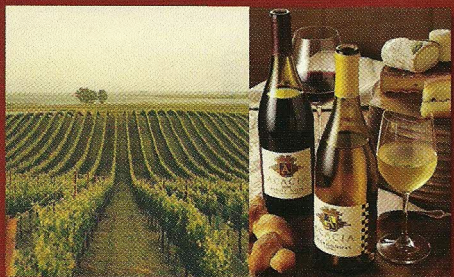

YOUR GUIDE TO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA WINERIES, THINGS TO DO & EVENTS



**JAMIESON RANCH**  
VINEYARDS

WINE and FOOD PAIRINGS  
Cheese, Chocolate or Comfort Food

**PAGE 24**

**THE HERITAGE WINE TRAIL**  
CARNERO TO CALISTOGA

**4 Iconic Wineries  
1 Amazing Day**

ACACIA VINEYARD, BEAULIEU VINEYARD,  
PROVENANCE VINEYARDS and STERLING VINEYARDS

PAGE 22



**PEJU PROVINCE  
'LIKE NO OTHER  
IN THE VALLEY'  
PAGE 26**

**SUISUN VALLEY  
GAINS NOTICE  
AGAIN  
PAGE 32**

**RUSSIAN RIVER  
VALLEY IN  
SAN FRANCISCO!  
PAGE 52**

**TASTING ROOM  
OF THE WEEK:  
DE LOACH VINEYARDS  
PAGE 54**

**RESERVE  
SONOMA  
VALLEY  
PAGE 60**

**PINOT  
ON THE RIVER  
FESTIVAL  
PAGE 56**



## Suisun Valley: Napa's Little Sibling Gains Notice Again

BY JOSH STEIN

Let's get the hard part out of the way: it's pronounced "Sih-soon," and the name comes from the Suisunes tribe, for whom it and the Bay were named. Napa wineries have looked to the east's next valley over for many decades, but it's only relatively recently that Suisun has begun to gain wider notice. A few years ago, a 90-point Syrah was made from a single vineyard source by Rosenblum, and, given how much Suisun Valley wine is out there labelled Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and North Coast, it's about time people took notice of what's been in their bottles all along!

Planted originally in the mid-nineteenth century, Suisun Valley originally supported a range of growers and Mangels Winery, one of the largest pre-Prohibition wineries in the United States before time and phylloxera did their damage. In the years since, wineries from throughout the North Coast purchased grapes for blending from several dozen growers, and, in 1982, Suisun Valley was given official AVA recognition. Given the soils, climate, maritime influence, irrigation and heat levels are the same as just on the other side of the Vacas, map lines have had more to do with the timing of that recognition than anything else.

Today, approximately 3,000 acres are under vine in the Suisun Valley, and that fruit continues to be sourced by numerous Napa and Sonoma wineries for inclusion in multiple product lines. Ironically, this isn't noted on most labels since the rules for location allow a percentage of blended wine and the appellation "North Coast" spans from Solano through to the Sonoma and Mendocino Coasts, allowing the unknown sibling to remain under cover. Regardless, there are now more than a dozen wineries with tasting rooms in the Valley, including Vezér Family, Blue Victorian, Ledgewood Creek and Wooden Valley Winery, plus a collective tasting room housing another half-dozen smaller producers. What may be most surprising is that more than a dozen Napa wineries offer Suisun Valley bottlings,

including those from V. Sattui, Croze, Forlorn Hope, Olabisi and Quixote.

Going one step further is the just-permitted project by Caymus in Cordelia, and understanding its significance requires a moment of Napa history, too. In 1968, the Napa County Board of Supervisors passed a zoning ordinance that created the country's first Agricultural Preserve, which holds that agriculture is "the highest and best use" of most Napa County land, making it very difficult to expand production footprints, even for longtime wineries, without tremendous amounts of capital for land acquisition first. The ordinance has been vital to preserving Napa as Napa, but what are growing wine companies to do today?

This is why Caymus's just receiving permits to break ground on vineyards and winery in Cordelia, a literal whistlestop town only visible from local roads in Solano County, is such a game-changer for Suisun Valley. Their purchase of 260 acres allows the processing of wines outside the Napa regulations and actually closer to transportation lines, which is really a huge impact on wineries seeking to expand. As romantic as a hillside setting is, getting full trucks up to and down from it is no fun, as I have plenty of personal, white-knuckle experience to testify. Being on a major transportation corridor saves lots of time and hassle – which means lower costs to everyone, including the consumer most of all.

One can see the slow growth in recognition actually helps today's Suisun Valley. In a world looking for the new, the different, the undiscovered, here is the Valley, almost exactly the same today as it's been for a century and a half: quietly producing great wines which help out its far-better-known siblings, Napa and Sonoma. Do yourself a favor the next time you're headed to the latter. Stop off of Interstate 80 and take Suisun Valley Road to taste what the North Coast has been keeping quiet to itself for a long time. You'll be glad you did – enjoy!



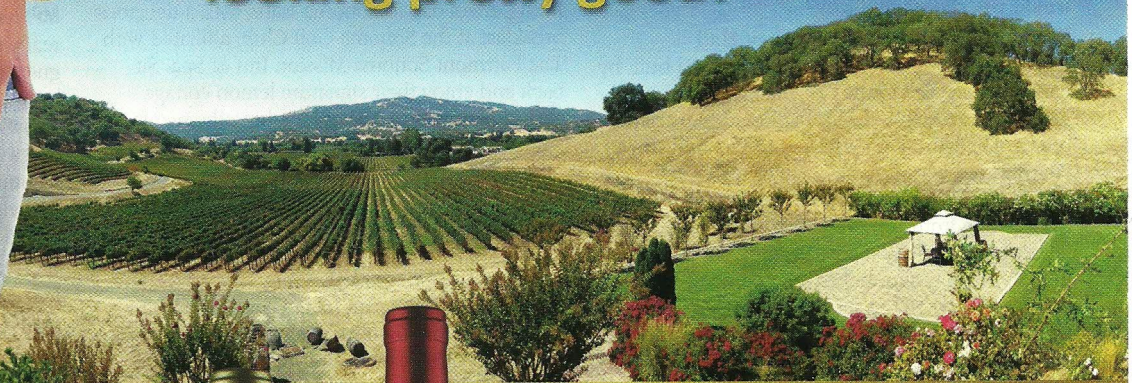
# VEZÉR

FAMILY VINEYARD

888-823-VINE (8463)  
VEZER.COM



The backside of Napa is  
looking pretty good!



**Come say hello  
to Suisun Valley &  
Vezer Family Vineyard**

**Vezer Family Vineyards Tasting Room**  
Mon-Thu 11-5, Fri-Sat 10-6, Sun 10-5  
2522 Mankas Corner Road

**Blue Victorian Winery**  
Daily 10am-5pm

5071 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield  
707-422-8025 | www.BlueVictorian.com

**Vezer Family Private Ranch**

Tours by appointment only  
Available for Weddings & Events  
Call 707-422-8025



**Ask about our new  
Legacy Room & ATV Tours!**

Mention this ad for 2 free tastings  
and 10% off of wine purchases  
at Vezer Family Vineyards  
or Blue Victorian Winery