

AFAR

How to Pretend You're in Napa Valley at Home

By [Natalie Beauregard](#) 05.06.20



Photo by [Andrew Zarivny/Shutterstock](#)

Escape the monotony of lockdown by imagining yourself in beautiful Napa Valley.

While you're stuck inside, use this itinerary with tips from locals to recreate a trip to wine country.

If one thing's for certain in the time of COVID-19, it's that we're all drinking a lot more wine. After yet another day of depressing news, canceled plans, and too many Zoom calls, there are few things more comforting than a country-club pour of your favorite red.

Still, how much better would it be if, instead of drinking on your couch, you were sipping a fine cabernet overlooking a beautiful vineyard in Napa Valley? I know, I know, we're not supposed to be traveling right now, but that doesn't mean you can't still go to wine country, if only in your mind.

To make your imaginary trip easier, we've rounded up everything you need to recreate a day in Napa at home, complete with suggestions from several local experts. So, charge your computer, pick up your favorite wineglass, and get ready to explore wine country, all without the added stress of finding a designated driver.

8 a.m. Start your day on a healthy note

Don't even think about reaching for that sad, sugary cereal. If you were really in Napa right now, you'd be starting your day with something fresh and local, like the smoked salmon flatbread from [Napa General Store](#).

Thankfully, the dish is easy enough to recreate in your own kitchen with ingredients you can find at your local grocery store. Simply warm up a Boboli pizza crust, spread crème fraîche over the entire thing, layer on smoked salmon, and pop it back in a 400-degree oven for three minutes. When it's starting to look good and crispy, remove it from the oven. Top it off with arugula, capers, pickled red onion, and a drizzle of sour cream. Then slice and enjoy, preferably alongside a cup of joe from [Napa Valley Coffee Roasting Company](#), the go-to brew for Patrick Davila, director of operations at [Meadowood Napa Valley](#).

To inspire your day, flip through *A Vineyard Garden* while you eat. The James Beard Award-winning book offers advice on gardening, decorating, and entertaining from Molly Chappellet, cofounder of [Chappellet Winery](#) in Saint Helena, and it features 250 color photographs of her beautiful vegetable plots, grapevines, and berry patches.

Buy Now: *A Vineyard Garden*, \$61, [amazon.com](#)

9 a.m. Put on the jams

We'll get to winetasting eventually, but first, let's set the mood with a little music. If you're willing to go all-in on the wine-country theme, turn on our [custom playlist of wine-related songs](#), including the 1983 gem "Red Red Wine" by UB40.

For something a little more authentic, pull up this [YouTube clip](#) of singer Blaine Mitchell performing live at [Jessup Cellars](#). Each year, once a month from June to October on Saturday nights, the Yountville winery hosts a "conversation and song" series called the Art House Sessions, and the Yountville Chamber of Commerce recommends this particular show.

9:30 a.m. Don your Napa Valley best

In order to imagine yourself in Napa, it helps to look the part. Guys, all you really need is a button-down shirt and a pair of khakis, but ladies will want to dig out their chicest sundress, a wide-brimmed hat, and oversize sunglasses. For inspiration, check out Saks Fifth Avenue's [2020 spring lookbook](#), which features styles inspired by Napa Valley, including a Rebecca Taylor sleeveless sundress and a Prada bucket bag.

Buy Now: Rebecca Taylor Lily smocked midi dress, \$595, [saks.com](#); Prada woven leather bucket bag, \$2,200, [saks.com](#)

10 a.m. Uncork some knowledge

Now that you're dressed and ready to go, immerse yourself in all things Napa with some light reading. For local news, Angela Jackson, director of media relations for Visit Napa Valley, suggests the [Napa Valley Register](#), which has been in print since 1863.

If you'd prefer something more escapist, both Jackson and Patrick Davila of Meadowood recommend Robert Louis Stevenson's [The Silverado Squatters](#). The book details Stevenson's two-month honeymoon in Napa Valley in 1880, when he and his new wife stayed at an abandoned mining camp on Mount Saint Helena, and it offers a fascinating perspective on 19th-century California.

Buy Now: The Silverado Squatters, \$11, [amazon.com](#)

12 p.m. Get cooking



Courtesy of Shutterstock

Make like you're in Napa and drink some white wine with your lunch.

Oh look at that, it's already time to eat again. You nailed it with the smoked salmon flatbread, so why not try your hand at another classic Napa dish, like this [lemony shrimp salad](#) from renowned chef Richard Reddington, who owns [Redd Wood](#) pizzeria in Yountville. Pair your lunch with a refreshing white wine like Inglenook's recently released [2018 Blancaneaux](#), a complex blend of marsanne, roussanne, and viognier with notes of minerality and lemon zest.

2 p.m. Hang with the Shafer sheep, then head to Yountville

Now, go exploring. Start at [Shafer Vineyards](#) on Napa's famous Silverado Trail. The winery placed cameras among the vines to record its sheep grazing, capturing adorable animal sounds in the process. You can catch [the resulting video](#) on the vineyard's YouTube channel—the six-hour stream, which was posted at the beginning of April, already has nearly 200,000 views.

Once you've had your fill of bleating, continue on to Yountville and take a virtual stroll of the town's beloved [Art Walk](#). Established in 2009, the trail features up to 35 rotating outdoor sculptures, most of which are for sale through the [Yountville Arts Commission](#). For even more culture, attend Yountville's annual "Art, Sip, and Stroll" festival, which is being held online this year through May 31. You can access exclusive studio tours, live concerts, and winetastings through the [virtual event calendar](#) on the website.

End your "visit" to Yountville at chef Thomas Keller's first retail store, [Finesse](#), where you can shop for fancy kitchen tools, apparel, gifts, and more. Jessica Penman, director of community relations at the Yountville Chamber of Commerce, recommends Keller's [Cup4Cup gluten-free baking mixes](#), which come in varieties like cornbread, pancakes, pizza crust, and multigrain bread.

4 p.m. It's finally wine o'clock!



Photo by Matthew Clemente/Shutterstock

Beringer's virtual wine tastings will transport you straight to Napa.

You've cooked, you've read, you've looked at art, but you really came to Napa to drink wine, so saddle up for a virtual tasting with one of Napa's best

vineyards. [Beringer](#) in Saint Helena offers Instagram Live tastings with chief winemaker Mark Beringer and wine club ambassador Carlos Valdivia every Wednesday at 4 p.m., during which they explore two wines, discuss Beringer's 144-year history, and answer all your questions. Follow [@beringervyds](#) for more info, as well as promotional offers and free shipping deals on the vineyard's award-winning wines so you can buy bottles in advance of the tasting.

In case Beringer's event doesn't align with your schedule, [Krupp Brothers](#) in Napa is doing a similar thing, hosting "Toast with the Doctor" live winetasting experiences on Facebook and Instagram with proprietor Dr. Jan Krupp and assistant winemaker Desiree O'Donovan. Check the vineyard's website for [upcoming events](#), then purchase a [virtual tasting package](#) and log on when it's time to start sipping.

Davila also suggests the [tastings](#) compiled on the Napa Valley Vintners website, held by everyone from [Boisset Collection](#) to [Stags' Leap](#) and [Clif Family Winery](#). "Just make sure to have some [Cowgirl Creamery](#) and Andante Dairy cheeses to complement your tasting," he says.

Buy Now: *Classic Cowgirl Cheese Collection, \$70, [goldbelly.com](#)*

5 p.m. Switch to the hard stuff

At this point, you've most likely had your fill of chardonnay and pinot noir, so Angela Jackson of Visit Napa Valley recommends mixing up a margarita from downtown Napa favorite [Gran Electrica](#). Simply combine 1.5 ounces of blanco tequila (something like [Siete Leguas](#)), $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of triple sec, 1 ounce of freshly squeezed lime juice, and $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of agave syrup in a shaker filled with ice. Shake for 15 to 20 seconds to chill and dilute the cocktail, then strain over a salt-rimmed, ice-filled rocks glass and add a fresh lime wheel for a garnish.

6 p.m. Dine out at home



Courtesy of La Toque

Bring a taste of La Toque into your own home by cooking chef Ken Frank's signature short ribs.

With happy hour under your belt, move on to one of Napa's best restaurants for dinner. You can eat at the Michelin-starred [La Toque](#) without leaving your home by cooking up chef Ken Frank's [easy short ribs with braised red wine](#) and pairing them with a Napa cabernet sauvignon. The [Cameron Hughes Lot 567 Cabernet](#) is a great budget pick, while the [Alpha Omega 2015 Thomas Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon](#) is a worthy splurge.

If you'd like a little more guidance, opt for a [virtual cooking class](#) with Round Pound Estate. Chefs at the Rutherford winery have been hosting regular sessions on everything from open-fire cooking to making ricotta gnocchi, teaming up with a wine educator to also provide wine pairings. You can stream the classes on the vineyard's social channels (either [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [YouTube](#)); just download the recipe and ingredient list (available within each event listing on Round Pond's website) beforehand so you're prepared to cook along.

8 p.m. Take yourself to the movies

Finish off that bottle of cab while watching a movie set in Napa. The obvious choice here is Amy Poehler's directorial debut, [Wine Country](#), in which six women travel to Napa Valley to celebrate a 50th birthday, but you could also lean classic with 1995's [A Walk in the Clouds](#), starring Keanu Reeves as a WWII soldier who meets a woman on a bus and follows her to Napa. For something slightly truer to life, opt for [Bottle Shock](#), which is loosely based on the original [Judgment of Paris taste test](#).

10 p.m. Visit the spa before bed

Before hitting the hay, treat yourself to a little spa time. First, mix up the "Valley Glow Bath Soak" from [Carneros Resort and Spa](#) in Napa by combining ½ cup of Epsom salt, ½ cup of Dead Sea salt, 2 teaspoons of baking soda, and 8 to 10 drops of lemon balm essential oil, and pouring it all into a warm bath. The tincture will soothe sore muscles, calm the nerves, promote restful sleep, and deliver "that Napa Valley glow," says Jackson.

If that all sounds like too much effort after several glasses of wine, use a [wine-scented bath bomb](#) from Napa Soap Company instead. Our personal favorite is the Cabernet, made with pink grapefruit essential oil and hibiscus flowers. Afterward, light a [Napa Valley Candle Co.](#) candle—we like the French Lavender—and relax in bed, imagining the day when you can go to Napa for real.

<https://www.afar.com/magazine/how-to-recreate-a-day-in-napa-valley-at-home>