

Looking for an Artisan Winery in Napa Valley?



By **SF Insider** - November 14, 2018

Napa Valley winemakers have been known to disagree over the precise connotation of the term “artisan” in its application to wine. Some have argued, for instance, that the term applies more to amateur or home wine makers, while others see the term as an indication of goods that are rooted in a strong sense of place, such as with the use of native or wild yeast. Often, though, the term is used to describe wine makers with a commitment to the craft of wine, which extends to evaluating and innovating the very techniques used to make it. Of course, that could apply to a great many Napa Valley wineries but here are some of the experts’ favorites.



Napa Valley has a collection of classic artisan wineries that serve remarkable wine.

Alpha Omega

Alpha Omega Located just off Highway 29, like many of the more iconic Napa wineries, it released its first vintage in 2003 before opening to the public in 2006. It has been praised especially for its fruity taste and tactile silkiness in the mouth.

Elyse Winery

Elyse considers the art of making wine like “cooking without a flame.” In other words, the winery approaches the process as a great chef might, carefully preparing artisan-grown ingredients and bringing out the best of each. The 2007 Grenache, made with whole clusters and even infused with dry grapevine canes (drawing on an old Rhone Valley tradition to enhance aromas), is a particular favorite among tasters.

La Jota Winery

La Jota is the boutique arm of Markham Vineyards, known for its Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petite Sirah. The private vineyard was established in 1976. Its 2009 Cabernet Franc in particular has been praised for its complexity and rich, black fruitiness, thanks in part to its hand-crafted and unfiltered production.

Franciscan Estate

St. Helena’s **Franciscan Estate Winery** has a pleasantly antiquated feel for an artisan vineyard, complete with vaulted wood-beamed ceilings and recycled oak cask flooring. It’s also home to the so-called Rutherford Bench, a large stone slab that’s something of an in-joke among locals. One of the most praised vintages is the 2010 Chardonnay, which was made with wild yeasts for a rich and graceful finish. Tasters particularly like its fruitiness and subtle hints of oak.

Embrace your travel spirit and visit any or all of these fine wineries. You’ll be treated to a wide variety of services infused with delicious cuisines.