

THE PRESSES

WINERY REVIEW

MURRIETA'S WELL: THIS LIVERMORE WINERY HAS A BOUNCER

By: Chris Macias

Murrieta's Well makes it as clear as Riedel stemware that they require reservations. But what happens if you're rolling solo through Livermore wine Country and don't have a reservation? Can a person still get some sips of Petit Verdot from one of the area's more respected and historic wineries? The checkered-shirt guy thinks about it for a second. He doesn't exactly roll out the red carpet. But he does say to go ahead and park, then check-in with a concierge on the winery grounds. And thank the great Greek god of the grape, Dionysus, there happens to be a spot available in the winery's upstairs tasting room.

The winery's stone building dates back to the late 1800s, when some of the surrounding vineyards were planted with cuttings from Chateau d'Yquem. The property later added A gravity flow winery. The Wente family purchased it in the early 1930s. Wente Family Estates continues to oversee this operation, which it renamed Murrieta's Well in 1990.

The friendly server at the upstairs tasting bar explains this history between pours of a Tempranillo with herbaceous and peppery notes. Murrieta's Well now oversees 500 acres of vineyards with 20 varieties planted. These varieties include Petit Verdot, which produces a dense wine with prominent dark fruit.

Guests who follow the protocol and make a reservation can also opt for a wine and food experience in the barrel room. Others can unwind on an upstairs patio deck that offers a prime valley view. They can also drink near a spacious lawn area that sometimes includes live music. No matter where you sip, the staff will likely greet you in checkered shirts. They seem to be everywhere, and while they're friendly enough, they sometimes look like they're hovering. Rather than nitpick, I drain the last drops of the Spur, a balanced and juicy Bordeaux-style blend. An afternoon breeze wafts through the grounds.

Given the overall quality of the wines and the relaxed pace of the experience, there are no reservations about coming back again.

WHAT TO TRY: While Livermore is very much a land of red varietals, the local Sauvignon Blanc sourced by Murrieta's Well is crisp with juicy notes of lemon and stone fruit.



MURRIETA'S WELL
ESTATE VINEYARD



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