

Guide to Wine Tasting Rooms

February 2006

The Napa Valley hosts infinite options to fill up your day or week with great things to do, taste, and enjoy. Napa and its surrounding Wine Country neighbors, offer a full sensory experience from winery tours, convertible drives through rolling vineyards, hot-air balloon rides, to more low-key dining, spa treatments, shopping, and countless educational offerings. Both tourists and Bay Area locals can find new things to do with every trip.

If you're in the company of serious wine tasters, just-for-fun tasters, or "I could care less about wine" tasters, spending an evening or a whole day in Downtown Napa offers plenty to do for everyone. While some may choose to head straight for the tasting rooms, others can browse in and out of countless stores in the downtown open-air mall, or relish in a spa treatment or two.

This guide will give you a brief overview of the independent tasting rooms located in Napa.

Why would I visit a tasting room, rather than one of the many wineries in the area?

Wine tasting rooms give you the opportunity to taste boutique and limited production wines from Napa Valley and beyond. You can both expand your wine knowledge, and relax in more exclusive, intimate environment to enjoy with a group of friends or just your significant-other in a shorter period of time. You often get "more bang for your buck", can walk easily from one location to the next, and select from a variety of food or shopping locations to stop at in between your tasting room visits.

Napa's 10 main wine tasting rooms include: Back Room Wines, Bounty Hunter Rare Wine, COPIA, JV Wine & Spirits, Napa General Store, Napa Valley Traditions, Napa Wine Merchant, Vinter's Collective, Robert Craig Wine Cellars, and Wineries of Napa Valley.

Each tasting room has its own distinct ambiance, featured wines (from few to many), room size (good for a large or small group) and additional offerings. Some tasting rooms are very "tasting focused", while others you will find to be more retail in focus. WineRelease.com suggests checking the room's website to see what they plan to pour the day you visit, or to find out other activities that they may have scheduled such as barbeques, owner/wine-maker visits, or special "top-pick" tastings. Most rooms post their upcoming events at least a week in advance, if not earlier.

Where are Napa's tasting rooms located?

Downtown Napa, itself, is located about an hour north of San Francisco, just northeast of Carneros, off Highway 29. For a full view of its location in relation to the whole of Napa Valley: http://www.napavalley.winecountry.com/visitorsinfo/Napa_Valley_Winery_Map.pdf

All of Downtown Napa's 10 featured tasting rooms are within walking distance of the main parking garage off the Town Center, although there is plenty additional parking all around the area. Maps of the area including shopping, parking, and other attractions are here <http://www.napadowntown.com/map.html>

<p>Back Room Wines (707) 226-1378 http://www.backroomwines.com 974 Franklin Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Mon – Thu: 10am – 6pm Fri: 10am – 9pm Sat: 10am – 7pm</p>	<p>Napa Valley Traditions (707) 255-8544 http://www.napatraditions.com 1202 Main Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Mon – Fri: 11am – 6pm Saturday: 10am – 5pm</p>
<p>Bounty Hunger Rare Wine & Provisions (707) 255-0622 www.bountyhunterwine.com 975 First Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Sun – Thu: 11am – 10pm Fri – Sat: 11am – 1am</p>	<p>Napa Wine Merchants (707) 257-6796 http://www.napawinemerchant.com 1146 First Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Sun – Thu: 11am – 10pm Fri – Sat: 11am – 1am</p>
<p>COPIA (707) 259-1600 http://www.copia.org 500 First Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Wed – Mon: 10am – 5pm</p>	<p>Robert Craig Wine Cellars (707) 252-2250 x1 http://www.robertcraigwine.com 880 Vallejo Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Mon – Sat: By appointment</p>
<p>JV Wine & Spirits (707) 253-2624 http://www.jvwineandspirits.com 426 First Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Everyday: 8am-9pm</p>	<p>Vintner’s Collective (707) 255-7150 http://www.vintnerscollective.com 1245 Main Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Wed – Mon: 11am – 6pm</p>
<p>Napa General Store (707) 259-0762 http://www.napageneralstore.com/ 500 Main Street Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Sun – Wed: 10am – 6pm Thurs – Sat: 10am – 8pm</p>	<p>Wineries of Napa Valley (707) 253-9450 http://www.napavintages.com 1285 Napa Town Center Napa, CA 94559</p> <p>Mon – Thu: 11am – 6pm Fri – Sat: 10am – 7:30pm Sun: 10am – 6pm</p>

When are the best days and times to visit tasting rooms?

The wine tasting rooms in Downtown Napa have varying hours of operation. Some rooms prefer to showcase their tasting around specific event nights (example, “A Taste Tour of Italy”), while others offer tastings by appointment only at all times, for a more personal experience. This is all important to note when planning your stops (not that a “plan” is necessary, albeit recommended if you have specific “must-see” destinations). In most cases, Wine Release suggests Friday evenings or Saturdays are best bets for your visits.

How much do the wine tasting rooms cost?

The individual cost of Napa's wine tasting rooms can vary from \$2 - \$40 depending on what event is going on at the time, if food is included, how many different wines they are pouring, and which wineries/vintages are available at the time you visit. Most of the wine tasting rooms list their events and associated costs on their websites. If you intend to visit more than one tasting room during your visit, however, WineRelease.com recommends picking up a "Wine Tasting Card" at any of the 10 tasting rooms.



For \$15, the wallet-sized card allows you varying benefits at the 10 tasting rooms. Officially, they say it affords you a 10-cent initial tasting at each room, however, WineRelease found that it generally gets you 1-3 decent pours of the wine they are currently featuring at most of the rooms. The card also allows additional discounts, ranging from free admission to COPIA, 10% off on all wine and wine related products, free cookbooks, discounted membership into wine clubs and more. The free admission to COPIA, alone, makes the card worth the purchase (which was \$12.50 the day WineRelease was there).

The card has a long expiration date on it, which means that you don't have to cram all the tasting room visits into one day. Although, do note, the discount is only allowed once per room. It also has a small map printed on the back which helps you find each of the 10 rooms in the area.

Whether you have a lot of time to spend in Napa or a little, tasting rooms allow you to taste a wide variety of wines at one time. Making your visit that much more enjoyable.