



On Earth Day, red white winemakers proud to be green, too

Explore a different part of Livermore Valley wine country with this itinerary for a great afternoon of wine tasting with a minimum of driving.

Bay Area News Group

Posted 4/17/2014

Plan your Livermore Valley Wine Country visit [here](#).

It's springtime, and the hills of Livermore Valley wine country are a beautiful green -- the perfect backdrop for Earth Day. Wineries across our region will celebrate on April 27 with eco-focused classes, walks and talks. But, for many local wineries, every day is Earth Day.

"[Page Mill Winery](#) has focused on sustainability, being green and being a good steward to our environment for decades," says owner and winemaker Dane Stark. "We use light format glass and local grapes, are judicious with new oak barrels and allow our customers to refill bottles."

Dane was a part of the committee that created the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices, which is now an industry standard. The crux of this philosophy is finding the intersection between being environmentally sound, economically feasible and socially equitable.

"We grow organic grapes, which provides a richer soil biosphere, more organic matter and less dependence on manufactured fertilizers," Dane continues. "I tell customers visiting the tasting room that the weeds are courtesy of organic farming. It takes them a moment to realize that a vineyard without weeds -- perfectly manicured rows -- is achieved with a trade-off. Weeds beneath the vines are proof of lower fertilizer pressure and no weed killers or pre-emergent sprays." [Retzlaff Vineyards](#) is certified organic by California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), a nonprofit organization that certifies more than 2,700 organic operations in 38 states and three countries.

"We prefer to eat and drink products ourselves that are grown organically, so having a certified organic vineyard was a natural for us," says owner and manager Salome Taylor. "Our customers enjoy knowing that the wine they are drinking comes from fruit that has not been treated with any poisons. We have a whole new following of environmentally conscious customers. They kick off their shoes and let their toes enjoy a safe and eco-friendly lawn experience while visiting."

[Eagle Ridge](#) was the first winery in the Livermore Valley wine country to go solar. Several years ago, Eagle Ridge also switched to a lighter-weight bottle and last year to a non-tin capsule to decrease the winery's carbon footprint.

"With the amount of sunlight in the Livermore Valley, it seemed a natural decision to harness that energy to keep our wine under 62 degrees year-round in the tasting room and wine storage area," says Jim Perry, owner and winemaker at Eagle Ridge. "Our winery and our home are 90 percent powered by solar with a 10 kwh (kilowatt-hour) panel system."

The cost savings of electricity is seen in the bottom-line costs of Eagle Ridge wine. They also recycle glass as part of the Alameda County program and know that the lighter-weight glass decreases the tonnage to the landfill.

For details on Down to Earth events at wineries across California, visit discovercaliforniawines.com/d2e. For help planning your wine tasting trip to Livermore's wine country, visit www.LVwine.org.

Between the Vines in a bi-weekly column on wine and wine making in the Livermore Valley wine region. This column was contributed by the Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association.