

FOOD // WINE, BEER & SPIRITS

13 Napa and Sonoma wineries where the food is as ambitious as the wine



Jess Lander

March 1, 2022 | Updated: March 2, 2022 5:20 p.m.

Long gone are the days of tasting wines at Napa and Sonoma wineries with breadsticks. Fine dining-level food is becoming the norm now with many spots offering elaborate wine and food pairing experiences that spotlight ingredients like caviar, squab and Dungeness crab.

It's been propelled, in large part, by a wave of top Bay Area chefs — many with experience at Michelin Star restaurants — leaving restaurant jobs for winery gigs. The latter offer better hours and less stress, and chefs are often able to access fresh ingredients from on-site gardens and farms. They are now poised to compete with the Bay Area's top restaurants.

From sips with small bites, like a wild mushroom toast topped with poached egg yolk and black truffle, to filling, multi-course meals that can satisfy lunch — and cost just as much or more as dining out — here are 13 by-appointment wine and food experiences to seek out in Wine Country.

WHEELER FARMS

A tour of this bucolic St. Helena estate includes a visit to the on-site gardens and chicken coop, for both are key in the curation of Wheeler Farms' culinary experience. For the Cabernet-focused J. H. Wheeler tasting (\$125 per person, by appointment), winery chef Tom Harder, formerly of Cindy Pawlcyn's Napa landmark, Mustards Grill, pairs four wines with flavorful canapés served on a spoon, like a braised short rib arancini.

*588 Zinfandel Lane, St. Helena,
wheelerfarmswine.com*

