

Published August 26th, 2015

Day Trippin

By Fran Miller



Domaine Chandon property Photos Fran Miller

Yountville has changed greatly over the 17 years in which my girlfriends and I have gathered annually in the tony 1.53-square-mile hamlet. With a front row seat, we've witnessed the town's elegant gentrification. Having dined at most of the restaurants, wined at many of the tasting rooms and local wineries, and meandered the sidewalks and back roads, we continue to be charmed by Yountville and all it offers. At less than an hour's drive from Lamorinda, one can easily make the trip in a day. But with so much to see, eat and drink, and with fall specials at the ready, why not make it a weekend?

Book a room at the North Block Hotel (6757 Washington Street) where guests are invited to eat, sleep, work and play like a Napa Valley winemaker. Modern, but oozing with old world charm, North Block is partnering with Rutherford's Round Pond Estate through October to provide a winemaker-

led, hands-on experience. Help with the harvest, tour the facility, and taste Round Pond's estate wines with seasonal food pairings. Head back to the hotel for a swim in the lovely outdoor pool before enjoying dinner at the award-winning Redd Wood, famed chef Richard Reddington's second, more casual Italian-inspired Yountville restaurant, sibling to Redd.

Bardessono is easily Yountville's most luxurious retreat, and also its most "green." One of only three LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) platinum certified hotels in the country, Bardessono is proof that a hotel can be both indulgent and environmentally conscious. Bardessono guests are well respected in the valley and are afforded "access." Whether it is restaurant or wine tasting reservations, in-room spa treatments, chauffeur services, or a desire for a delicious, locally sourced, gourmet midnight snack from restaurant Lucy, staff will make it happen.

Yountville's main road, Washington Street has become home to numerous wine tasting rooms. A few standouts include Girard at 6795 Washington Street where tasting fees are waived for those staying in Yountville hotels. Enjoy a flight of their chardonnay and cabernet-based wines, which, you will learn in wine lingo, have both "power and finesse."

Silver Trident Winery's 6495 Washington Street location is like walking into a Ralph Lauren catalogue, and in fact, everything you see, from the furniture to the crystal wine goblets is for sale by Ralph Lauren Home. The Tuscan-style stone building with its intimate and beautifully appointed living room is a great spot to settle in for a relaxed tasting. New to Washington Street (6505) is Cornerstone Cellars where each Sunday through September from 3 to 6 p.m., local musicians serenade a crowd that receives two-for-one tastings.

Step off the main drag and enjoy some champagne (or officially, sparkling wine) at Domaine Chandon (1 California Drive), an easy and picturesque walk from town. The gardens and property are beautiful, but the tasting room does get crowded with fans of the country's number one premium sparkling wine. Domaine Chandon, opened in 1973, was the first French-owned sparkling wine venture in the U.S. Pair your bubbly with delicious handmade chocolates from Kollar Chocolates at the V Marketplace (6525 Washington Street), home to assorted galleries and boutiques. Chef Chris Kollar, recently named one of the top 10 chocolatiers in North America by Dessert Professional magazine, makes his chocolates in small batches in a glass show kitchen. A fall

visit to his shop might reveal his Halloween and holiday creations.

Any article about Yountville would be remiss without mention of Thomas Keller and his restaurant empire. Yountville is home to four of his current 13 eateries nationwide: the famed French Laundry, Ad Hoc + Addendum, Bouchon Bistro and Bouchon Bakery, where a single macaroon imparts the Keller magic. There is delicious reason for the lines that spill down the street from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

Work off your weekend indulgences with a quiet back road stroll amongst vineyards and majestic oaks on Yount Mill Road. Start at Yount Cross Road, end at Highway 29, and head back again. This is Yountville as it used to be, and it's lovely. But the current version is pretty great too.



Domaine Chandon property

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA