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SILVERADO RESORT & SPA

Napa's Silverado Resort & Spa will host a festive tree-lighting ceremony with free cookies and cocoa, live music and a visit from Santa Claus at 6 p.m. Nov. 25.

Wine Country offers holiday events, fun gifts, one-of-a-kind experiences

By Jeanne Cooper

The grapes may be off the vines, but winter holidays bring a new harvest to Northern California's Wine Country. Those looking for unique gifts and experiences will find plenty to glean in Napa and Sonoma valleys, where wineries and resorts are decked in seasonal apparel.

Here are some highlights:

Just for the holidays

Now's the time to snap up seats to two tastings available for a limited period in December. Jordan's Holiday Tour & Tasting (\$85 per person) is available only Dec. 1-16, 1 p.m. Thursday through Monday at the 1,200-acre winery in Healds-

burg. The 90-minute experience begins with a taste of Jordan bubbly, an hors d'oeuvre with caviar and a walking tour through the barrel room and past oak tanks. A seated tasting of Russian River Chardonnay and Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon takes place in the dining room with a lit fireplace, accompanied by more hors

d'oeuvres, artisan cheeses, homemade cookies and Tcho hot cocoa.

Jordan also sells sustainably packaged gift sets (\$34-\$225) with vintages selected by winemaker Maggie Kruse, estate-grown olive oil, spice rubs and wooden boxes made in Napa as options; see www.jordanwinery.com/shop for selections.

At PlumpJack Estate in Oakville, sip a retrospective of Reserve Cabernet Sauvignons from the last 10 years during the Reserve Library Tasting Experience (\$225 per person), held Dec. 8-13. A curated cheese plate and hand-crafted chocolates accompany the tastings of the winery's most sought-after wines. Or book one of the winery's regularly available tastings, both with vineyard views, as a gift for a later date: The 90-minute, seated PlumpJack Experience (\$100 per person), a

guided tasting of a flight of flagship wines and a library wine, takes place on an oak-shaded hilltop, while the hourlong Current Release Tasting (\$60 per person) pours the latest vintages on the back patio.

Family fun

Mery Meritage, the holiday village of Meritage Resort & Spa, combines artisan markets, an ice rink (\$25 per person, open through Jan. 8) and daily snowfall at 6 p.m. beginning Nov. 25, when the resort's annual tree-lighting ceremony starts at 4 p.m. Held on the Lawn at Vista Collina, the ceremony includes a visit by Santa and live music by carolers and a band fronted by Chicago lead vocalist Jason Scheff; grownups can partake of optional wine and craft beer tastings. The tree-lighting ceremony is free but tickets are required for the event;

see www.exploretock.com/meritageresort.

Families may also want to book the resort's Tinsel Tea, offered at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10, 17 and 24 in the Vintner's Room. The price (\$50 for ages 4 to 13, \$75 for ages 14 and older) includes tea, juice, sparkling wine for adults, kid-friendly sandwiches, mini cookies and assorted sweet treats, plus a ticket for 90 minutes of ice skating and use of skates. Reservations are available on www.exploretock.com/meritageresort.

Italian fun and flair

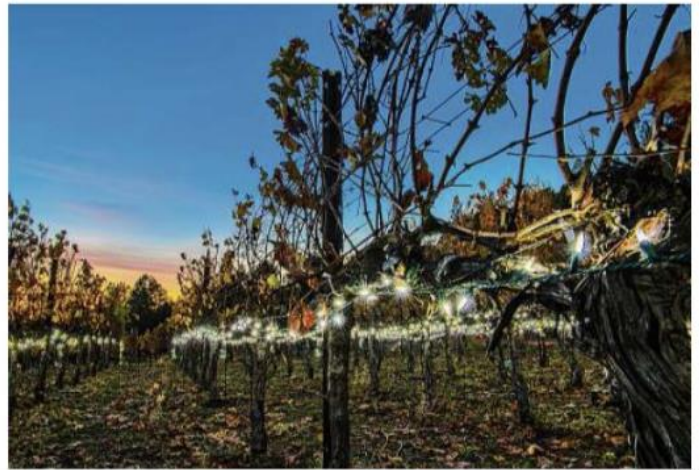
Eleanor Coppola, wife of filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola, created the textile design used on the label of her namesake red wine, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. A special gift set (\$160) features a numbered bottle of her wine with a lightweight wool scarf sporting a variation of that design; it's available at the Geyserville winery and through its website.

Also at the winery, a wine and bocce package (\$400 for up to eight guests) includes a customized fight of





MARC FIORITO / GAMMA NINE PHOTOGRAPHY



BOB MCCLLENAHAN



MERITAGE RESORT & SPA



CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA AT COPIA

Clockwise from top left: Jordan Vineyard & Winery sells custom spice blends, created to pair perfectly with Jordan wines, including the Lazy J Rub and the Chardonnay Lover's Rub; a Napa Valley vineyard is decorated in holiday lights; the Culinary Institute of America at Copia features a variety of gifts, including a French-made Laguiole knife in a wooden box or a large walnut cutting board crafted by a Napa woodworker; visitors enjoy the Merry Meritage, the holiday village of Meritage Resort & Spa.

Details

Jordan Vineyard & Winery: 1474 Alexander Valley Road, Healdsburg, 707-431-5250, www.jordanwinery.com

PlumpJack Estate Winery: 620 Oakville Cross Road, Napa, 707-690-1213, www.plumpjackwinery.com

Meritage Resort & Spa: 875 Bordeaux Way, Napa, 866-370-6272, www.meritageresort.com

Francis Ford Coppola Winery: 300 Via Archimedes, Geyserville, 707-857-1471, www.francisfordcoppolawinery.com

Silverado Resort & Spa: 1600 Atlas Peak Road, Napa, 844-421-6474, www.silveradoresort.com

Marketplace at the CIA at Copia: 500 First St., Napa, 707-967-2500, www.ciaatcopia.com/marketplace

Donum Estate: 24500 Ramal Road, Sonoma, 707-732-2200, www.thedonumestate.com

Vaughn Duffy: 8910 Sonoma Highway, Kenwood, 707-282-9156, www.vaughnduffywines.com

Hamilton Family Winery: 8860 Sonoma Highway, Kenwood, 707-408-3090, www.hamilton.wine

Prohibition Spirits: 452 First St., Sonoma, 707-933-7507, www.prohibition-spirits.com

www.ciaatcopia.com/classes.

Not sure what to get? The CIA gift card, available online, can be used for experiences at the CIA at Copia and the Greystone campus in St. Helena, among others.

Artistry in Carneros

More than 50 large-scale sculptures and other works by international artists dot the 200-acre Donum Estate, which offers three reservation-only guided tours of the land and art that include private wine tastings and canapés prepared with ingredients grown on the estate. Book at least six to eight weeks in advance.

The 90-minute Discover Experience (\$125 per person) is available at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. daily, while the 2-hour Explore Experience (\$175 per person) holds the tasting in an open-air salon and is available Friday-Sunday. The new

their Vaughn Duffy label, the Seasonal Sampler (\$20 per person) involves tastes of four small-lot, North Coast bottlings, including Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Zinfandel, while the Purely Pinot Tasting (\$30 per person) surveys four Sonoma County Pinot Noirs. Tastings are limited to groups of six or fewer people, with one fee waived with a two-bottle purchase.

At Hamilton Family Winery, owners Lindsay and Greg Hamilton pour their

small-production, naturally fermented wines in a garden shaded by olive trees. Tastings (\$45 per person, waived with \$100 purchase) include Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Rosé of Grenache and red blends, made with minimal intervention practices.

Holiday spirits

Grapes are not the only source of Wine Country libations, as two shops in Sonoma prove. Pick up a gift bottle of Limoncello di

Sonoma (\$27), the unique Figcello di Sonoma (\$27-\$47) made with black Mission Figs or another of some 50 small-batch products at Prohibition Spirits' tasting room on Sonoma Plaza. The family-owned craft distillery can also arrange after-hours events, offsite tastings and mixology classes.

Nearby, Pomme Cider Shop & Taproom sells more than 100 ciders from around the world, plus Champagne and natural wine; you can also try 18 ciders on tap.