



Yosemite's Happy Isles Creek

to the winemaker way beyond an ordinary tasting or dinner. You can talk to a winery owner or winemaker between sessions, at the reception or dinner, or during an accidental bump in the lobby, which makes the experience truly special."

TALES OF VINTNERS PAST

The event has also served as a place for vintners to relax. Karly Langley, the Ahwahnee concierge, has witnessed some of the Yosemite adventures — or, more accurately, misadventures — of several winemakers. "George Bursick of Ferrari Carano went ice skating the afternoon of the gala dinner," Langley recalls. "We wondered why he had not arrived for dinner, only to discover he was at the medical clinic with a broken shoulder. Another time, Tom Rinaldi, who was with Duckhorn at the time, hiked to the top of Yosemite Falls, not taking into consideration that it gets dark very early in winter. He managed to descend the trail in darkness and on the gala dinner — very late."

Occasionally, attendees later become vintners. While savoring his Vintners Holiday vacations, Dan Philips realized how much he loved the world of wine. "One of the moderators motivated and mentored us to follow our dreams. Five years ago, we traded our suburban home for a small house and winery in the Russian River area." In 2003, the couple launched Inspiration Vineyards.

At the vintners' reception, Scott Jackson of Nevada City, Calif., said he was motivated to sign up for his first Vintners' Holiday because he's a fan of Landmark Vineyards.

"My wife and I recently won a double magnum of Landmark wine at an auction," he said. "We just told Mary Colboun, owner of the winery, that we enjoyed — and finished — the bottle in one night with our friends. It was fun to meet her and share our story with her."

Another set of first-time attendees excelled the Ruzquist seminar held that afternoon when they blended their unique wine from samples aged in different barrels. Bob Filke of Los Gatos, Calif., likened the experience to acromathery in terms of finding the best bouquet. Beyond wine tasting, he and his friends planned a diverse set of activities for the next morning: photography, hiking and sightseeing on the valley tour bus.

IT'S HIGH TIME FOR WINE!

Schramberg's Davies kicked off the session with a tasting of premium sparkling wine. Next up was Jeff Ruzquist, winemaker at McManis Winery and owner of



the wine report 125

2003 Serengeti Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot (Swartland, South Africa)

Summary: This wine offered berry flavors with some chocolate mint and oak with hints of leather and black olives. Aromas were of berry, vanilla, oak, and earthiness. Tasters found flavors of dried berries, jamminess, a sweet-spicy earthiness with nice body, and some prune and oak tones in balance. The finish was complex, "imbalanced but not a problem for this wine."

Food Friendliness: A nice complement to red meats, including beef and rack of lamb. This wine could stand up to some sauces as well.

88
POINTS

\$14
GOOD VALUE

2001 Hercules Paragon Cabernet Sauvignon (Western Cape, South Africa)

Summary: Tasters saw deep, dark colors that were appropriately red in hue. Aromas were of green pepper, clove, black cherry, and cedar. Well balanced with raspberries, prunes, and sweet red fruits, this wine had a somewhat light body with a medium finish and a touch of sweet tart.

Food Friendliness: It would pair very well with rare red meats, possibly those including a reduction sauce. One of the "best of panel" when tasted with food.

86
POINTS

\$28
PRICED CORRECTLY