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— Wine & Spirits —

Experience California Wine Country in Style at These 9 Effortlessly Luxurious Vineyards



Courtesy Cliff Lede Vineyards

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Welcome to the most exclusive tasting rooms on the West Coast.

By Jonathan Cristaldi on March 22, 2021

[California wine country](#) has been busy at work coming up with creative ways to showcase their most profound offerings. The paradigm shift in opportunities to taste wine over the last year, despite the pandemic, far from faltered—it seemed to multiply almost tenfold. And the alternative ways to visit Napa virtually—with wine country just a click away—are likely here to stay. And how could you argue with having top-flight \$125-a-bottle cabernet shipped directly to your front door for a private, or semi-private virtual tasting with the winery owner, and often, the highly regarded winemaker? However, as oenophiles return to the [best tasting rooms in California](#), we've hand-picked nine of the most luxurious wine tasting experiences around California. These [wineries are sensitive to continued mask mandates](#) and guest preferences for indoor versus outdoor tastings. It's best to pick up the phone when booking any of these tasting opportunities to hash out the conversation in real-time about what to expect and how to have the time of your life—safely, and come on, *extravagantly*.

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AXR

Beyond the Mayacamas Mountains on the northern edge of St. Helena in a tree-lined hideaway among the redwoods, you'll find AXR's tasting room where you can sample handcrafted selections from partner [Jean Hoefliger](#), a winemaker of international prestige who walks you through your very own wine blending process. After receiving tips from the expert, you'll craft your own personal cabernet sauvignon blend and learn how the various vineyards and oak barrels affect the flavor of the wines you love.

But the real fun is getting to spend time with a tried and true Napa winemaking star. You could geek out with Hoefliger about the name "AXR," an infamous rootstock that was widely planted in California before it was ravaged by a louse called Phylloxera. (You might ask him to explain why they named their winery after such a thing.) And while you're crafting your dynamite blend, know that he's always up for debate of some kind. He did, after all, craft a 100-point wine called [The Debate](#). Hoefliger is best known for a long stint as the winemaker at [Alpha Omega](#), but he worked at French icon [Château Lynch-Bages](#) before that. Today, he lives in Marin County, happily consulting for an array of wineries, and his supreme talent is on full display in the lemon-scented, ginger-spiced textural chardonnays, laser-focused sauvignon blancs, and expertly crafted, finely layered red blends at AXR. So, book your blending session well in advance (\$250 per person), and come prepared to walk out with more than you ever thought you'd know about winemaking and Napa Valley. To book, send an email to info@axrnapavalley.com or call 707-302-8181.

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