

Wine And Wellness Blend At The Westin Verasa Napa

By Divina Infusino



Photo Credit: Westin Verasa

With several new developments underway, one can say that Napa Verasa Westin is having “a moment.” This week, it operates as a headquarters for the 5th annual Napa Valley Film Festival, which is fitting. The hotel’s longtime general manager, Don Shindle, sits on the event’s board and the ski lodge-meets-wine-country lobby—fireplace, comfy furniture and a wooden floor composed of wine barrel ends—suggests an atmosphere vaguely reminiscent of Sundance or Telluride.

Its restaurant, Chef Ken Frank’s La Toque, just retained its Michelin star again. Drawing from local purveyors, the menu continues to focus on the intermingling of flavors and textures, whether it’s Prime Rib Eye with Fiscalini Cheddar Pearl Tapioca and Rutherford Red Wine Sauce, Grilled Octopus with Za’tar, toasted Almonds, Dates, Cauliflower and Pickled Lime Yogurt or Garden Squash Ravioli involving Roasted Tomatoes, Porcini and Parmesan Essence.

But perhaps the hotel’s most significant development is La Toque’s newly-instituted complimentary wine concierge service. With 2,100 individual wine selections, the list, which carries Wine Spectator’s highest honors, is thoughtful, geographically-encompassing and, well, overwhelming.

“We have 81 pages of wine choices, 10 pages of Cabernet Sauvignon alone. We have wines from the everyday to geeky and esoteric. Most people look at our list and think, ‘That’s a lot of wine.’ The wine concierge helps them navigate the offerings,” says La Toque’s wine director Richard Matuszczak

La Toque’s specialty is pairing wine with its food menu, a skill Matuszczak describes as “more art more than science.”

“When you see a wine paired with a dish on our menu, I have gone through a process where I might start with 30 wines, narrow that to three of them and then finally taste those wines with the dish,” says Matuszczak. “I know the style of our food and over-ripe, over-oaked, over-extracted, high alcohol wines do not work with the menu. Our food is more subtle than over the top and our wines tend to be the same. They come out of the glass quietly.”

As a balance to all the culinary and wine sumptuousness, Westin Verasa Napa has expanded its wellness program, which already includes an athletic package providing workout clothes, shoes (no more hauling luggage space-hogging athletic footwear) and socks for \$5. The hotel now offers complimentary yoga classes on the patio on Saturdays and has mapped out a self-guided animal and plant tour of the serene Oxbrow Preserve that borders the property.

Of course, your trek may well end with a stop at nearby Oxbrow Public Market, The Fatted Calf, or The Model Bakery, offsetting the romp around the preserve. If so, there is always the Westin’s well-outfitted gym with its chilled after-work out hand towels.



Walk around Preserve



Yoga



Fitness center



La Toque