

From its official launch this autumn, La Vallée Restaurant ([www.lavalleerestaurant.com](http://www.lavalleerestaurant.com)), our fab restaurant and lounge, is more than living up to its early press. What are they saying? How about "A new jewel in Vancouver's culinary crown," "What a gorgeous restaurant," "The perfect restaurant to sneak off to..." and "Dining at this vino-themed restaurant is the perfect ending to an intoxicating vacation." Couldn't have said it better ourselves. And we've been included in Vancouver Magazine's 2007 City Guide roundup of fine restaurants and it shows that we've got it right.

So what's all the hoopla about? Simply that La Vallée's "contemporary wine country cuisine" is inspired by some of our amazing western wine regions—the Napa, Columbia and Okanagan Valleys to be exact. Our wine country menu was designed by Chef Gregory Short of San Francisco's internationally acclaimed 'wow' restaurant, Masa's, located in our sister property, Executive Hotel Vintage Court. We're thrilled to have Chef Short on board. As at Masa's, you'll find contemporary flavours married with classic French themes that pair brilliantly with our fine West Coast wines.

Now that we have your attention, and once you've wined and dined in La Vallée, you've probably noticed that all of us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park have a thing for West Coast wines. We've partnered with many of these western wineries and named rooms and suites after them; we've hung wine-themed art hither and yon; there's a sweet wine list happening in La Vallée restaurant and lounge; and B.C. wines are stocked in mini-bars. And in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary happy hour wine tastings in La Vallée's lounge. Got a little time to spare? We can arrange wine tours to B.C.'s wine regions and beyond.

Just so you know, we strive to have as much fun with our great West Coast wines as we can, and that means tasting widely, increasing our partnerships with the wineries, and sharing our finds with our guests. You'll see what we mean and why as we profile these wineries, their winemakers and their best bottles in our wine letters.

With the holidays almost upon us, we're gearing up to celebrate in style and the team at La Vallée is getting into the holiday mood. They've created festive menus, stocked the wine cellar with treats, and are itching to start the celebrating. We can help with everything from business get-togethers to planning a special New Year's Eve.

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## **Just the Facts**

Here's the dirt on B.C. wines and wine country:

- Jesuit missionary Father Charles Pandosy first made wine in B.C. in 1859 in the Okanagan; the first commercial wines were made in the 1920s; and B.C. wines stepped up in 1990 when old varieties of grapes were pulled out and replanted with premium varieties.
- Currently, B.C. has 140 licensed wineries (in 1981 there were just 14 struggling to make a buck) and another 26-or-so in the pipeline. This includes a dozen fruit wineries, cider makers, and sake (rice wine) producers.
- There are 411 grape growers growing 60 grape varieties (48% are white, 52% are red).
- The top whites are chardonnay, pinot gris, and gewürztraminer; top reds include merlot, pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon.
- In 2006, 6,632 acres of land were under vine.
- We have five wine regions:   the Okanagan  
                                  Similkameen  
                                  Fraser Valley  
                                  Vancouver Island  
                                  Gulf Islands

And since we're also partial to other West Coast wine regions, namely the Columbia Valley in Washington, and Napa Valley in California, you'll find some of their top wines on La Vallée's expanded wine list too. If you haven't visited the regions, do. The landscape is unlike anything else on earth...and you'll understand why it's "the perfect climate for wine."

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## **Wine Buys:**

Want to take a bottle or two home? Here are a couple of our favourite wine shops, handily within strolling distance.

Marquis Wine Cellars, Vancouver's first wine shop, has a stellar selection of B.C.'s best bottles, and hot picks from the West Coast. Ask for resident wine guru David Lancelot.

1034 Davie Street, 604-684-2471,

[www.marquis-wines.com](http://www.marquis-wines.com)

Taylorwood Wines sells only B.C. wines at winery-direct prices. Ask for a taste—there's usually something open.

1185 Mainland Street

604-408-9463

[www.taylorwoodwines.com](http://www.taylorwoodwines.com)

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## **Spotlight**

### **Wine Region: Napa Valley, California**

If you've ever visited Napa Valley, you can vouch that it lives up to its magical name—Napa is derived from the aboriginal word for plenty—and it's that in many ways including the ever-growing number of wineries (close to 300). The Napa Valley has been the driving force and leader in the California wine industry in terms of quality and progress since the region emerged as a wine making area back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The industry was squelched during prohibition but made resurgence in 1970s with Napa leading the charge. Land wise, Napa's AVAs (American Viticulture Areas—say that and impress the gang) have 43,000 acres under vine (that's wine speak for grapes planted) in an area between the Mayacamas and Vaca Mountains that's 30 miles long and five miles wide. Some of these AVAs include Atlas Peak, Carneros, Mount Veeder, Oakville, Rutherford, St. Helena, Stags Leap, Wild Horse Valley, and Yountville to name a few. Wineries? Some of the better known include Mondavi, Cakebread, Clos du Val, Beringer, Andretti, Rutherford and Signorello. This last one is owned by Vancouverite, Ray Signorello. You'll find these and more on La Vallée's wine list.

### **Winery: Cakebread Cellars**

Like countless others Jack Cakebread stumbled into owning a vineyard. He casually mentioned to friends and family while visiting Napa an interest in perhaps one day owning a vineyard. It quickly became a reality. In the intervening 33 years, much has changed in the wine industry. Cakebread Cellars has grown into a large internationally distributed wine company yet it remains very much a family business. From their first vintage of 157 cases of chardonnay in 1973, production has ramped up to 14 highly sought after wines.

**Wine Wiz:** Julianne Laks, Cakebread Cellars

A 25-year veteran winemaker, Laks has had a hand in turning out stellar wines at Cakebread Cellars for the past 20 years, starting as oenologist then assistant winemaker to Bruce Cakebread until she became reigning winemaker in 2002 when Bruce took over as president from his father. Laks is the third winemaker and the first non-family member to make Cakebread wines.

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**Top Drops:**

**White: Rutherford Hill Chardonnay Napa Valley 2003**

This soft creamy chard has been called “gentle and generous” and regularly garners big points with wine mags’ top tasters. We love its fresh apple notes and toastiness from smoothly integrated oak. Bring on the shellfish.

**Red: Cakebread Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2003**

This super sipper lures one in with notes of ripe inky black fruit, rich dark chocolate, leading you on with lush, intense blackberry, black cherry, and sweet figs.

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**Cool Stuff:** Did you know that wines are low in sulfites and people who think they are sensitive to them, especially in red wine, probably aren’t. The culprit behind “red wine headache” is much more likely to be a group of chemicals called biogenic amines, which include tyramine, histamine and others. Sulfites occur naturally in all wines, and are often added to wines (reds more than whites) to stop them from turning to vinegar, oxidizing and going bad. True sulfite allergies are relatively uncommon and can result in wheezing, dizziness, accelerated heartbeat, and hives. To find out if you’re truly allergic, eat a few dried apricots—a packet of these has way more sulfites than an entire bottle of red wine—about 2000 ppm vs. a legal maximum of 350 ppm in wine (most wines have less) and see if the symptoms occur.

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**Wine Speak**

Don’t know a fat wine from a thin one? Woody from wooly? Here’s

where we let you in on some of the lingo that goes along with wine. Drop a few of these babies and you'll sound like a pro.

**Austere** These are wines that aren't very pleasant to drink. They're often hard, rather dry, and lacking in richness and generosity.

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### **What's on?**

If you're around or you'll be back soon, put some of these on your calendar:

Early Bird Tickets on sale for the  
**Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival 2008**  
(Ciao, Italia! February 25 to March 4)  
604-872-6622  
[www.playhousewinefest.com](http://www.playhousewinefest.com)

November 17 to 18  
**Curds & Whey Cheese Festival**  
Granville Island Public Market  
Wine tasting, pairings, and cheese, cheese, cheese  
[www.granvilleisland.com](http://www.granvilleisland.com)

November 17  
**21st Anniversary Champagne & Sparkling Wine Tasting**  
Marquis Wine Cellars. 1-4 p.m. (free)  
1034 Davie Street  
[www.marquis-wines.com](http://www.marquis-wines.com)

November 18  
**Tasting - Cocktail Party Wines**  
Taylorwood Wines, 3-5 p.m. (free)  
1185 Mainland Street, Vancouver  
[www.taylorwoodwines.com](http://www.taylorwoodwines.com)

November 21  
**French Fete.**  
Vancouver Museum, 7 p.m., \$75  
1100 Chestnut Street  
604-684-0445  
[www.marquis-wines.com](http://www.marquis-wines.com)

November 22  
**Book Signing + Tasting - Pacific Northwest Wining & Dining**

with author, Braiden Rex-Johnson  
Barbara-Jo's Books to Cooks, 6.30 p.m.  
1740 West 2nd Avenue  
604-688-6755

November 22

**Tasting - BC Meritage, latest releases**

Taylorwood Wines, 4.30-6.30 p.m. (free)

1185 Mainland Street

[www.taylorwoodwines.com](http://www.taylorwoodwines.com)

November 29

**Tasting - Icewine**

Taylorwood Wines, 4.30-6.30 p.m. (free)

1185 Mainland Street

[www.taylorwoodwines.com](http://www.taylorwoodwines.com)