



PHOTO BY ALEX FARNUM

The sweeping vineyard views at Auberge du Soleil in Napa wine country are timeless.

## 13 World-Class Restaurants in Napa and Sonoma

If you're visiting California wine country, the whole point is to drink and eat well. It takes a special kind of restaurant, then, to go above and beyond the region's standard for dining excellence. These 13 restaurants in Napa and Sonoma are a cut above the rest, be it for their vineyard views, their championing of producers both local and global, or their creative renditions of all types of cuisine. [Check out our North Coast picks.](#)



PHOTO BY ANGELO DECENZO

Andrew Green caters to both San Francisco foodies and Silicon Valley power lunchers.

## Sommelier Talk: Bay Area's Andrew Green

Andrew Green, 46, first joined the Bacchus Group at the [Village Pub](#) in Woodside, Calif. in 2001, with a \$60,000 wine inventory; only a few months later, he led the program to its first *Wine Spectator* Restaurant Award and, in 2013, its first Grand Award. Today, Green keeps the wine flowing at seven other restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area, including fellow Grand Award winner [Spruce](#) in San Francisco and Award of Excellence winner [Mayfield Bakery & Café](#) in Palo Alto. *Wine Spectator* talked with him about what it's like to teach about wine, how to juggle different wine list demands and the differences in wine tastes between San Francisco's fashionable crowd and Silicon Valley's power lunchers. [Find out his secrets to success.](#)



### WINE SPECTATOR PICK

#### FAVIA Viognier Amador County Suize 2013

**94 points / \$110-\$240 range on wine lists / 172 cases made**

*WS Tasting Note:* Supple and elegant, with restrained fleshy pear and peach notes that are smooth as silk. The details make this wine stand out, from touches of mineral and toasted fennel seed to hints of roasted peanut and dried jasmine. Drink now. —*MaryAnn Worobiec*

*Why It's a Good Restaurant Choice:* Viticulturist Annie Favia and her husband, Andy Erickson, former winemaker at Screaming Eagle and Harlan, created Favia in 2003. The couple—who make a range of Rhône-style varietals and Napa blends of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon—practice minimal intervention in the winery with some wines, like this pick, being both unfinned and unfiltered. It's named after Marie Suize, one of Amador County's gold-rush prospectors; today the Sierra Foothills region has even better prospects in Rhône grapes like Grenache, Syrah and Viognier. The grapes are whole-cluster pressed and fermented in neutral barrels, producing a richly fruity and texturally attractive white, which can pair with a variety of food. Seafood dishes such as Dungeness crab, Scottish sea trout à l'orange, and slow roasted Pacific abalone are recommended.

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ANDREW PURCELL

A ripe Époisses should have a strong barnyard aroma, with a rind that is moist and shiny.

### FOOD ARTS

## On the Cheese Board: Époisses

With its infamously funky aroma, Époisses de Bourgogne is a veritable gastronomic miracle: How could anything this stinky taste so good? Made from cow's milk in Burgundy's Côte d'Or region, this cheese is repeatedly washed in marc de Bourgogne, a brandy distilled from the grape pomace left after making wine, resulting in its colorful orange rind. Once you get past the smell, you'll find a silky, smooth paste—which melts to a custardlike consistency at room temperature—with flavors ranging from meaty to sweet cream to mushrooms and nuts. On a restaurant cheese plate, look for iconic brands such as Fromagerie Berthaut, Germain, Rodolphe Le Meunier and Hervé Mons. This washed-rind cheese also shows up in recipes: Chef Michael Rafidi of Grand Award winner [RN74](#) in [San Francisco](#) suggests an Époisses Toast Gratinée, an open-faced grilled cheese sandwich topped with pickled shallots and onion jam. [Get the recipe and learn about other iconic cheeses in \*Wine Spectator's\* Sept. 30 issue, on newsstands now.](#)



## Rue Cler: A Slice of Paris in Downtown Durham

**401 E. Chapel Hill St., Durham, NC; Tel: (919) 682-8844**

Named after a market street in the 7th Arrondissement, [Rue Cler](#) brings a Parisian neighborhood-dining experience to Durham, N.C., earning its first Award of Excellence in 2016. Led by owner and wine director Nathan Vandergrift, the wine program offers 185 selections with a focus on value across French regions; a large number of bottles are in the \$50-and-under range, while the reserve list includes verticals from Rhône star [Eric Texier](#), [Baudry](#) Chignon and more. Available both as prix-fixe and à la carte, the menu infuses local produce and seafood with classic French influence. [See the details!](#)

### TURNING TABLES

#### • ACCLAIMED CHEF MICHEL RICHARD DIES AT 68

Heralded French chef Michel Richard [died Aug. 13](#) due to complications from a stroke. Known for his playful yet refined approach to French cuisine and his talent as a pastry chef, Richard arrived in Los Angeles in 1976 and made a lasting mark on the U.S. dining scene. Richard's fondness for fine wine was reflected in several Restaurant Award-winning wine lists. [Learn more about the culinary trailblazer.](#)

#### • COMING SOON TO NEW ORLEANS: MERIL

From Emeril Lagasse's restaurant group, Meril is scheduled to open in New Orleans on Sept. 24 at 424 Girod St., in the city's Warehouse District. Named after the celebrity chef's daughter, the casual restaurant will be Lagasse's fourth venue in the city and his first new opening there since 1998. [What's on the menu?](#)

#### • REIMAGINED: THE ROTUNDA AT THE PIERRE

The Rotunda at the iconic Pierre Hotel in Manhattan has returned to the public eye. After being used as an event space for several years, the Rotunda reopened on July 13 as a dining room, redesigned to accentuate its iconic floor-to-ceiling murals. [Get a peek into menus both sweet and savory—and the beverage list!](#)

#### • NEW WINE DIRECTOR FOR FELIDIA

Lidia Bastianich's Best of Award of Excellence-winning [Felidia Ristorante](#) has gained a new wine director. In July, Jeff Taylor, previously wine director at [Betony](#), joined the team at the Midtown Manhattan restaurant, which offers 1,425 selections, with a focus on Italian bottles.

#### • FOGO DE CHÃO'S GUIDE TO BRAZIL

With the Olympics in full swing in Rio through Aug. 21, Brazilian steak house chain Fogo de Chão has released an [online guide to Brazilian cuisine](#). Featuring sections on Portuguese dining phrases, etiquette tips and recipes, the guide aims to educate guests about the restaurant's roots. With [41 Award of Excellence-winning locations](#) across the U.S. and Brazil in 2016, the Dallas-based chain is known for combining its roasted meats with extensive options in South American wines.

#### • RELOCATING: OLIVE AND VINE

In July, Olive and Vine in Glen Ellen, Calif., closed its doors. An Award of Excellence winner since 2014, the Sonoma County restaurant's list spanned 150 selections, with a focus on California wines. The restaurant plans to relocate to the Cooperage Inn in Sonoma next year.

*Any updates or in-the-know changes? Visited one of our award winners lately? Have a favorite restaurant you'd like to give a shout-out to? We want to know your picks! E-mail us, tweet us or tag us on Instagram.*

—Gillian Sciarretta, director of Restaurant Awards

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