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Guilliams Vineyards
Shawn and John Guilliams
www.springmountaindistrict.com

Guilliams Vineyards & Spring Mountain, CA

Guilliams Vineyards:

- ∴ The family planted the vines in 1979. They grow, vinify and bottle the wines themselves.
- ∴ Total production: 1000 cases from 7 acres of vines.
- ∴ The estate bottled Cabernet Sauvignon is blended with Cab Franc and Merlot.
- ∴ Wines are released after a year or more in bottle when the Guilliams feel they are starting to drink well. Thus they are a year 'behind' other Napa producers. The 2001's were released late 2005.
- ∴ The Guilliams home and winery looks out over the vineyards and down to Napa Valley and the town of St. Helena. The view alone speaks to why they chose this spot nearly thirty years ago.

Guilliams' and Food:

Dark, dense fruit combined with silky tannins typify Guilliams' strong yet balanced reds. Rack of lamb and grilled duck breast jump out as obvious pairings.

For a rack of lamb, marinate the meat in olive oil, garlic and rosemary and grill whole. Serve with crispy fried potatoes and thyme or stewed chard and tomatoes.

If you prefer duck, a dark red sauce with a bit of earthiness will work well. Mince three large shallots and sauté them in butter. When they are golden brown, add a half cup of red wine, with about as much cherry preserve and two tablespoons of soy sauce. If the sauce is too sweet, add some more soy. Paint this onto your duck breasts about 15 minutes before they come out of the oven. Happy times ahead.

An Introduction to Spring Mountain:

- ∴ Located above St. Helena on the eastern slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains which separate Napa Valley from Sonoma Valley.
- ∴ Wine grapes were planted first in the 1880's. The Spring Mountain AVA (American Viticulture Area) was established in 1993.
- ∴ Grapes grow alongside stunning virgin forests. New planting is strictly regulated by a 1990 law intended to protect the environment.
- ∴ Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc are the most widely planted grapes.
- ∴ Pride, Paloma, Spring Mountain, Philip Togni and Terra Valentine are a few other prominent Spring Mountain estates.

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More on Spring Mountain and Guilliams Vineyards:

Spring Mountain:

- ∴ Napa Valley includes 43,000 acres of vines. Spring Mountain has just 1000.
- ∴ There is no peak on Spring Mountain, more of a saddle that connects Mount Veeder and the Diamond Mountain.
- ∴ “Terroir is not the first word that comes to mind with the Napa Cabernet. However, a recent tasting of 22 top quality Cab and Merlot wines from the Spring Mountain appellation demonstrated more than a handful of unifying characteristics. ...red-fruit/cranberry character, naturally high acidity, and a pronounced chalky earthy quality were readily apparent in most, if not all the wines.” Tim Gaiser, Master Sommelier on a tasting of 2001 spring Mountain wines.
- ∴ Due to the altitude the growing season usually starts two to five weeks later than on the valley floor. Cool air and intense sunlight on Spring Mountain have an effect on the thickness of the skins and development of the tannins. It may part of the reason the wines are more restrained than those coming from the valley floor.
- ∴ www.springmountaindistrict.com provides an abundance of information on the wineries, history and geology of this AVA.
- ∴ The television series Falcon Crest was filmed on Spring Mountain at Spring Mountain Vineyards.
- ∴ Cindy’s Backstreet Kitchen is a terrific restaurant in St. Helena. If the “Chinatown Duck Burger with shitake ketchup” is on the menu when you go, it is almost required eating.

Guilliams Vineyards

- ∴ Guilliams is a family run operation. John manages the vineyards and Shawn sells the wine. They consult with a wine maker and are both intimately involved in the making of the wine.
- ∴ The grapes are fermented in one ton batches. John finds that this amount of grapes will naturally reach 85°-88° during fermentation, which is ideal for the extraction of color and tannin from the skins. Smaller bunches need to be warmed, larger batches cooled. John makes his wine as naturally as possible and likes to avoid intervening with the process whenever he can.
- ∴ John has also found that this “micro-fermentation” allows him to control the process and assign quality levels and characteristics to each separate block of grapes which he charts from year to year.
- ∴ John Guilliams co-authored the California Wine Institute’s Guide to Sustainable Winegrowing.
- ∴ The Guilliams are active members of their community. Shawn is the Treasurer of the Spring Mountain District Association.
- ∴ No grapes are purchased to expand production. A bottle of Guilliams wine is by definition grown on the seven acres of Guilliams Vineyard.

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