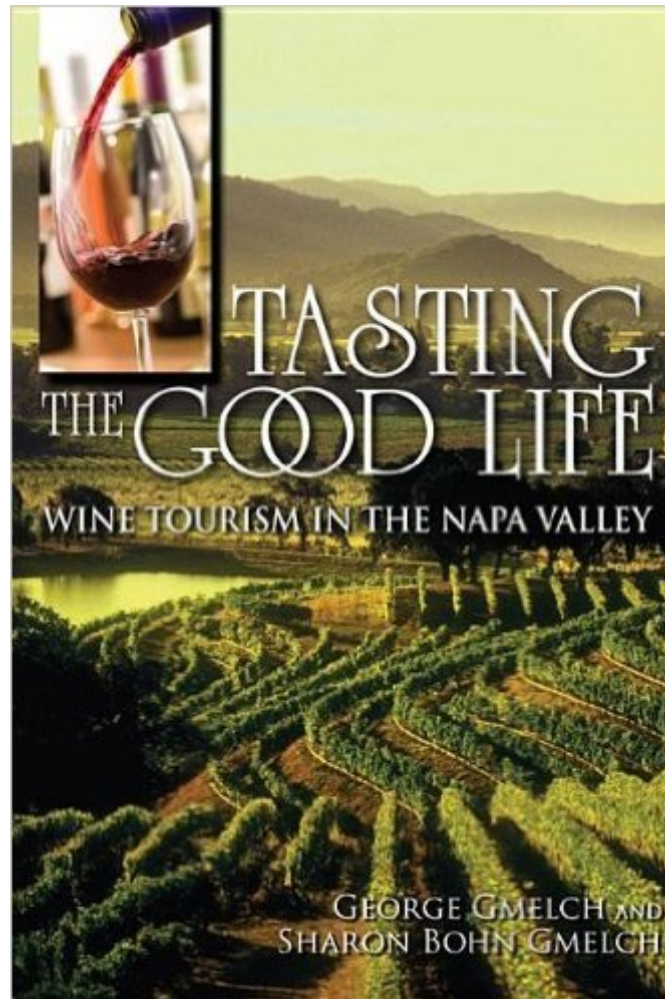


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Tasting The Good Life: Wine Tourism In The Napa Valley



Synopsis

While anthropologists often have been accused of failing to "study up," this book turns an anthropological lens on an elite activity — wine tasting. Five million people a year, from the US and abroad, travel to California's Napa Valley to experience the "good life": to taste fine wines, eat fine food, and immerse themselves in other sophisticated pleasures while surrounded by bucolic beauty. Written in a highly readable style by anthropologists George and Sharon Gmelch, *Tasting the Good Life* examines who wine tourists are and what the "tasting" experience is all about. It also examines the growth of wine tourism in the valley and the impact it is having on the landscape and the lives of the people who live there. In addition to the authors' own analysis, they present the personal narratives of 17 people who work in Napa tourism — from winemaker to vineyard manager, from celebrity chef to wait staff, from hot air balloonist to masseuse. Their stories provide unexpected and entertaining insights into this new form of tourism, the people who engage in it, its impact on a now iconic place, and American consumer culture in the 21st century.

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Customer Reviews

My husband and I are from the NY metro area. This August, we are joining friends--a couple from Europe--for a holiday in San Francisco. This European couple has travelled widely, but they have never been to the Bay Area before. To ensure their trip is as perfect as possible, I wanted to prepare for each segment of the vacation. To bone up on the Wine Country part of the itinerary, I browsed the titles available on tourism, wine tasting, and Napa and Sonoma Valleys. I selected this

book based upon its title, its academic press, and its very recent publishing date. The book is wonderfully written, but what delighted me most was the discovery that Mr. Don Partier was the author's subject for the profile of the consummate Wine Country Tour Guide. Back in 2003, my husband treated me to my first tour of Napa and Sonoma. After months of research and due diligence on guides, he selected Mr. Don Partier. That day in April of 2003 was unforgettable. I've since been to vineyards and tours across France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Greece, but nothing has compared to the grand tour provided by the impressive, yet down to earth, Mr. Don Partier. Mr. Partier applied his native knowledge to our advantage, taking my husband and me to hidden gems in the Valleys that few would find without his expertise on the industry and the area. The Gmelchs' profile of Mr. Partier is incisive; no wonder he was such a fine host. Glad that he is still working in the industry, we will certainly be in touch with Mr. Partier to guide us and our European friends around Napa to "Taste the Good Life" this summer. Bravo to the Gmelchs for a great book on Wine Tourism in northern California, epitomizing the ultimate wine country experience from an insider's perspective.

A must read for anyone who has been to Napa Valley, or is interested in going. This book gives a great overview of the history of the valley and an insiders peek at the people who make it thrive. Well-written with lots of information, not only is it an enjoyable read but an educational one. I appreciated my trip to Napa so much more due to the knowledge I gleaned from this book. Plus it is cheaper than a wine tasting and lasts a heck of a lot longer.

Have you ever tasted a good wine and wondered about the work that went into it? Or enjoyed a good meal in Napa and wondered about the lives of those serving it? This lovely book is replete with rich narratives about the people who work the soil, tend the tasting rooms, and assist others in enjoying a good meal. For those who have an interest in wine, people and the human journey, this is a pleasant read. I had visited Napa valley briefly before reading Tasting the Good Life. I plan to return to explore various adventures discussed in the book including biking, balloon flight, the Wind Train and wineries in this celestial valley. I would highly recommend Tasting the Good Life as a foretaste of Napa !

As a Napa Valley resident (and former winery tour guide) for almost 40 years, I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary growth of the wine industry. This comprehensive look at the entire cultural landscape here is one of the very few to offer an accurate picture of it. The authors have

managed to provide a fascinating insider's take on the realities of Napa Valley life rather than the hype we residents deal with on a daily basis.

TASTING THE GOOD LIFE by George and Sharon Gmelch is a great read. Having enjoyed wines for many years I found it interesting to know the development of wine tourism in the NAPA Valley. These skillful anthropologists interview a complete spectrum of players in the evolution of the wine and food industry that comprises the NAPA tourist experience. Especially valuable are the insights of vineyard workers, winemakers, tasting room servers, tour guides, chefs, managers, waiters and others employed by related tourist attractions. Anyone who enjoys wine or plans a trip to NAPA Valley will benefit from TASTING THE GOOD LIFE.

George and Sharon done an excellent job of turning the Napa Valley inside out, explaining to readers much about the beginnings of the culture and commodity that it has become. They give voice to the people who, together, make the famous valley what it is. Give it a read if you are interested in learning a great deal about the industry of wine, tourism, agriculture, or just looking for an interesting book!

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