

CELLARMISTRESS' CELLAR TALK

For A Breathtaking Experience...



One of the things I badly wanted to do on my latest trip to Napa Valley was to visit some off-the-beaten path little hideaways. (And yes, as skittish as I am, I was talked into visiting a mountain winery.) So on October 21st, my birthday, I headed to a place approximately 1550 feet above the valley floor--a magical place whose acreage and simplistic beauty just marveled my senses!

Perched high above the town of Napa against the slopes of Mt. George lies **Kenzo Estate**. A lot of you may have never heard of it. It is a fairly new winery, just having celebrated its grand opening this past July. Owned by **Kenzo Tsujimoto**, the Japanese founder of **Capcom**, this beautiful 4000 acre property is worth discovering. Years in the making, this winery has something for everyone--world class wines and impeccable hospitality! There are plenty of photo opportunities as the landscape and winery are breathtakingly beautiful!



We arrived that morning and were greeted by our host, who immediately made us feel welcome and brought us pashminas to wear to shield us from the cold mountain winds. We were given a tour of the grounds and the winemaking facilities. From the minimalist Japanese-style architecture and décor, to the beautifully transplanted olive trees outside, to the state of the art tanks and barrel caves, everything was pristine.



Talk about state of the art! The tanks are computerized so if something goes awry, the error can be fixed via phone! Never saw that before at any winery! Mr. Tsujimoto has employed the talents of some of Napa Valley's powerful heavy-hitters: **David Abreu**, famed vineyard manager, is responsible for tending the vines. **Heidi Barrett**, winemaker extraordinaire is making the wines. **Thomas Keller**, of the famed **French Laundry** and **Bouchon**, put together the food pairings. Now that is some star power there! But what about the wines??



For the past several years, the wines being made were made solely for the Japanese market and were being shipped overseas. With the opening of the new winery, the 2007 vintage is available and we did a sit down tasting of the winery's four wines plus a food pairing of Thomas Keller's sweet and savory breads. (Normally, there is a cost for this kind of tasting but the cost was waived for me.)



Please note, the thing I loved the most about this experience was the fact that it was relaxed and not rushed and we were able to take our time and just enjoy the moment. This is how it should be.



The first wine we sampled was the **2009 Asatsuyu**, a Bordeaux-style Sauvignon Blanc. It was an extremely crisp, citrusy version of this wine with exceptional minerality and underwent a small amount of barrel fermentation. \$60.

The three reds they make are all fairly similar as far as which Bordeaux components are used. The difference is in the percentages. All were 2007 vintage.



The “Signature” wine from Kenzo Estate is called **Rindo**. It was by far my favorite of the three reds. It was a big, fruit-forward California-style red, with a third each of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc and just a touch of Petit Verdot. Huge fruit, elegant finish. It will age gracefully for years to come. (If it lasts that long at my house!) \$75.

The **Murasaki** was even more elegant, with the structure changing slightly to feature Merlot as the main component. “More like a Pomerol than a Pauillac” as they would describe it. It was the female to the male counterpart Ai that I will speak of next. Still young in expression, this bottle requires some serious bottle aging. \$150.

The **Ai** was an amazingly powerful wine. Predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, it will go against all the “Big Boys” in Napa Valley. Tight but well structured, it will come into its own in the coming years. Patience is a welcome virtue in this case and well worth it. \$150.

A bottle of the **Rindo** made its way back to Iowa with me and the experience of visiting **Kenzo Estate** will live with me forever. I highly recommend visiting them for a unique, off-the-beaten path jaunt you won’t forget.



Kenzo Estate is located at 3200 Monticello Road, high above Napa. They are an appointment only winery and are open 10-4 seven days a week. They feature three different kinds of tastings so please check with the host regarding your options. Tastings are priced from \$30-60 per person. For more information, please visit their website at **kenzoestate.com**.

"You Saw It Here First"...This post was created solely for "Cellarmistress' Cellar Talk" by Grace Hoffman. Grace is an Italian-born, American-bred wine blogger/educator with an all-consuming passion for wine and all it encompasses.