YOU'VE COME TO NAPA, MOSTLY TO VISIT WINERIES AND TASTE THEIR PRODUCTS. As you drive up Highway 29 or the Silverado Trail, you note the wineries you pass, make plans to visit some of them, and start thinking about where to eat lunch. You stop at the Oakville Grocery for picnic supplies, jostling through the crowd at this trendy place. The sun is shining, you’re with your friends, and you’re having a great time. You take a Mondavi tour, or maybe you belly up to one of the tasting bars to get the sales hype along with your ounce and a half of the "blockbuster vintage that’s filled with cherry and raspberry and jammy black currant with a hint of Asian spice and violets on top of toasty oak with a touch of vanilla.” As you drive on to another winery, the countryside slips by scarcely noticed, except for its general beauty.

In the midst of all this abundance and sheer pleasure, we’d like to give you something else to do. We’ve included two guided tours of the valley, which provide a visual connection to some of the features and places discussed in this book. (One is presented here; the second follows chapter 5.) Although we hope that our descriptions in the text are informative, nothing replaces actually seeing the “real thing” on the ground. A firsthand glimpse, combined with a little knowledge, can make Napa’s features much more than just a hill, or a rock beside the road, or another steep and beautiful ridge.

If you undertake these trips, be sure to drive slowly and carefully, pay attention to the traffic,
and shut off your radio. Pull over when you want to take an extended look; relax and let your eyes range across the landscape.

An expanded, downloadable version of the Tours is available at www.ucpress.edu/winemaker/. There you may also send us comments and questions that arise from the tours or the book; we’ll try to provide an answer.

HIGHWAY 29, CARNEROS TO CALISTOGA

Traveling north from San Francisco, you enter the Napa Valley from the southwest, through the Carneros AVA, on Route 12. (For a map of the American Viticultural Areas in the Napa region, see page 7.) This road runs through the center of the AVA, which is one of two Napa Valley viticultural districts that straddle county borders. The western two-thirds of the Carneros AVA lies in Sonoma County, the eastern one-third in Napa. (Wild Horse Valley, mostly in Solano County on the east, has two small extensions into the Napa Valley AVA.) Coming into Napa from the southeast, on Routes 12 and 29, you traverse about three miles of the eastern portion of the Carneros AVA after crossing the Napa River.

The southern reaches of this AVA rise gently from the sloughs and marshes that mark the northern shore of San Pablo Bay. Its central section is characterized by rolling hills covered by Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Its northern regions, which are warmer than its southern parts, climb the southern slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains. The Glen Ellen formation underlies much of the Carneros region, making it geologically distinct from the rest of the Napa Valley AVA. The Glen Ellen is a series of sandstones, siltstones, and clay deposits formed mainly in alluvial fans, rivers, and lakes.

Carneros is an interesting and complex region with a unique viticultural and winemaking history. The climate here, strongly influenced by the waters of San Pablo Bay to the south and the inflow of ocean air from the Pacific to the west, is cooler and fogger than the rest of the Napa Valley AVA. Long considered suitable mainly for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, Carneros became a center for these grapes and for sparkling wine. More recently, Merlot has begun to thrive in the region’s cooler climate and clay-rich soils. In the northern part of Carneros, in the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains, a small region has temperatures warm enough to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon, the favored grape of most of the Napa Valley AVA (Figure 35). Our focus in this book is on the part of the Napa Valley AVA that grows this grape, the source of the region’s worldwide reputation. If you are interested in exploring Carneros in detail, we recommend following Carneros: Travels Along the Napa-Sonoma Edge, a field guide by Eileen Campbell, published by the Carneros Quality Alliance (available directly from the CQA or in local wineries).

At the eastern edge of Carneros, Highway 121 meets Highway 29, the main thoroughfare that runs north on the west side of the Napa Valley. For several miles north of this intersection, Highway 29 travels through the western side of the city of Napa. Gradually, the urban sprawl fades
and vineyards border the road. You are now driving through the Oak Knoll AVA, which begins at Trancas Avenue in Napa and ends in Yountville. Much of this AVA lies on a very large alluvial fan that extends from the mouth of Dry Creek. (Chapter 3 describes the origin of alluvial fans.) This deposit, which covers much of the width of the valley, stretches from just north of Napa to slightly south of the Veterans Hospital in Yountville.

Highway 29 runs along the western edge of the valley throughout its length. In the distance to the east (to the right, if you are going north) lie the Vaca Mountains (Figure 36). To the west

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**FIGURE 35.** Looking south from Truchard Vineyards across the rolling hills of northeastern Carneros to the flat landscape adjacent to San Pablo Bay.

**FIGURE 36.** The view east from Highway 29 south of Yountville, toward the Vaca Mountains, which rise behind the Stags Leap District.
FIGURE 37. The Mayacamas Mountains from Highway 29 south of Yountville. In their southern reaches, shown here, the crest of the Mayacamas slopes gently to the south.

FIGURE 38. Dominus, originally John Daniel’s Napanook, is located west of Highway 29 at Yountville. The vineyard can be seen in the center of the image, outlined by boundaries that diverge toward the hills. The winery, a gray rectangle, appears in the lower center. Aerial photography © 2003, AirPhotoUSA, LLC.
are the Mayacamas (Figure 37). Near the second exit for the town of Yountville, look to the left for a glimpse of the gray, minimalist winery building at Dominus. This vineyard was called Napanook when it was owned by John Daniel Jr., a legendary Napa figure of the 1940s and 1950s (Figure 38).

North of the Yountville Hills, after you pass Brix and Mustards Grill on the left, the valley opens to its widest extent. The vineyards on the left, at the foot of the Mayacamas, lie on a series of alluvial fans that edge the west side of the valley. Paradigm is located here, with Far Niente’s historic winery providing the focal point for this area. The winery was originally constructed as a gravity-flow facility in 1885 and then restored in the early 1980s by Gil Nickel, who owned it until his death in 2003. The winery is known for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay.

Harlan Estate, which produces one of the valley’s most intense and expensive wines ($235 a bottle), tops the low ridge behind Far Niente. Harlan overlooks Martha’s Vineyard, hidden from sight at the base of the hill (Figure 39). Martha’s Vineyard achieved renown when Joseph Heitz began bottling it in the mid-1960s as a single vineyard wine, which became known as a wine of exceptional balance and intensity with a notable mint character. Oakville Grade intersects Highway 29 north of Far Niente’s vineyards. Near the top of the grade, informal paths lead to the best panorama on the west side of the valley.

The valley remains wide and open all the way to St. Helena (Figure 40). It stretches along the lower reaches of the alluvial fans that extend, deltaike, from the mouths of streams that drain the Mayacamas Mountains (Figure 41). The road subtly reflects the topography of these fans, although
FIGURE 40. The southern part of the Napa Valley is open and spacious. This is the view looking northeast toward the Vaca Mountains from Highway 29 just north of Oakville Grocery.

FIGURE 41. Looking from the top of the Opus One winery westward toward the apex of the Oakville alluvial fan (A). The fan slopes outward from the mountain front in all directions, but so gently that the slope is difficult to discern. (B) Aerial view of Oakville fan with Robert Mondavi Winery at lower center. Aerial photography © 2003, AirPhotoUSA, LLC.
this may be difficult to perceive in the midst of weekend or commuter traffic. Early Saturday or Sunday morning, before eight o’clock, is the best time to see these features. Past Oakville Grade, Highway 29 ascends gently onto the Oakville Bench, which is actually two coalescing alluvial fans. As you pass the Oakville Grocery, Opus One appears on your right and the northern end of To Kalon Vineyard on the left. If you look to the left up one of the vineyard roads that extend all the way to the hills, you may detect a slight upward slope, the gentle surface of the alluvial fan.

The vineyards of Opus One and Robert Mondavi Winery are perhaps the best examples in the valley of closely spaced, severely hedged vines (described in chapter 5). Opus One is a partnership between Robert Mondavi and the late Baron Philippe de Rothschild, owner of Château Mouton Rothschild and other well-known wine properties. The spacing and hedging in these vineyards are more common in Bordeaux than in Napa. As you pass the Robert Mondavi Winery, the road slopes slightly downward, reflecting the northern slope of the alluvial fan.

Just past the Beaulieu Vineyard sign, the road begins to climb again, onto another fan, which crests at Manley Lane. This alternation of gentle upslope and down continues to St. Helena. At Rutherford, Niebaum Lane leads to Niebaum-Coppola, which includes the original Inglenook winery and vineyard founded by Gustave Niebaum in the 1880s. Niebaum-Coppola produces wine of several levels of quality and price, but it is perhaps best known for its flagship wine, Rubicon, a red blend made from grapes grown in the vineyards that produced Inglenook’s best wines in the past (Figure 42).
North of St. Helena, the valley narrows and changes orientation, from northwest-southeast to more nearly east-west (Figure 43). The road rises through town and peaks at Madrona Avenue. A few blocks down Madrona, surrounded by housing development, lies Spottswoode, one of Napa’s classic vineyards (Figure 44). Established in 1882, Spottswoode has been the property of the Novak family since 1972. The vineyard, managed by Napa native David Abreu, is located near the apex of the Sulfur Creek alluvial fan. Spottswoode grows organically and produces a classically rich and elegant Cabernet Sauvignon and one of the most highly regarded Sauvignon Blancs in the valley.

A couple of blocks north of Madrona lies the historic Rhine House, now the hospitality center for Beringer Vineyards. Founded in 1876, Beringer is the oldest continuously operating winery in the Napa Valley. To the north of Beringer, you pass the imposing rock walls of Greystone Cellars on the left, now home to the Napa branch of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), whose dining
rooms are open to the public. Past the CIA, north of the Victorian offices of St. Clement on the left, a series of small vineyards occupies the slopes, including Grace Family Vineyards, identified by its original one-acre plot fronting a gray Victorian house. Wine from this small property, first made as a family hobby, was a success from the initial vintage in the late 1970s. The Grace family uses the vineyard and its wines to promote a wide variety of charitable work with children.

Farther north, the road continues to rise and descend along the slopes of alluvial fans, which are smaller, steeper, and more noticeable than those to the south. As you look to the east (to the right, if you are going north), the fans slope distinctly downward into the flat valley at their feet (Figure 45). Through most of this northern segment of the valley, the hills, separated by only a narrow strip of flat land, tend to dominate the view. The exception lies at Dutch Henry Canyon (north of Larkmead Lane, looking east toward the Vaca Mountains), where the broad mouth of the canyon merges with the valley (Figure 46). North of Dutch Henry lies the narrowest part of
the valley, a ridge capped by the stark white buildings of the Sterling winery (Figure 47). Past this ridge, Diamond Mountain rises to the left, with Diamond Mountain Road intersecting Highway 29 north of the Sterling hill. Diamond Creek Vineyards (pictured on page 48) was one of the first properties developed here in the modern era.

At Calistoga, Highway 29 turns north into town, while Route 128 continues west, taking you first to Petrified Forest Road and then to Tubbs Lane. Petrified Forest Road heads over the Maya-camas ridge into Sonoma County and leads to the Petrified Forest for which it is named, a remnant of a lateral volcanic blast during the period of eruption of the Napa volcanics. On Tubbs Lane, in the northwestern extremity of the Napa Valley, lie both the gateway to the geysers—a remnant of volcanic activity—and Chateau Montelena Winery (Figure 48). Alfred Tubbs
founded Chateau Montelena in 1882. James Barrett restored the winery and replanted the vineyards in the early 1970s. The 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay, made by Mike Grgich (now proprietor of Grgich Hills), was deemed best of the white wines in the 1976 Paris tasting (see page 8). Montelena’s Cabernet Sauvignon has been one of Napa’s most consistent and highly acclaimed wines for the past thirty years.