



Above left: A tractor makes its way through vineyards in Clarksburg, which enjoys a cool maritime climate.

Above: Loyal Miner holds a glass at his Miner's Leap Winery. Miner, an attorney, opened the winery in 2013.

Left: A sign hangs at Miner's Leap Winery, which makes single-varietal wines and blends in small lots.

A TASTE OF CLARKSBURG

The Clarksburg AVA touches Yolo, Solano and Sacramento counties. Yolo Clarksburg is home to just a handful of stand-alone wineries, in addition to the Old Sugar Mill. While each celebrates this little piece of California terroir, these are a few of my favorites. Bonus point — no reservations required.

JULIETTA WINERY

Wine to try: 2015 Chenin Blanc (\$24). Visiting Clarksburg means visiting one of the few California regions where Chenin Blanc still thrives. Julietta Winery's interpretation is a perfect balance of crisp acidity, subtle fruit aromas of apples and pears, and an almost creamy mouthfeel that gives the wine an enjoyable weight and body.

51221 Clarksburg Road, Clarksburg; (916) 744-9090. www.juliettawinery.com. Tasting room hours: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday. Fee: \$5.

MINER'S LEAP

Wine to try: 2014 Pinot Noir (\$26). Miner will be proud to tell you that Clarksburg is a successful producer of Pinot Noir. The constant delta breeze keeps these thin-skinned grapes cool even in the summer sun. Those most familiar with Napa and Sonoma's take on the varietal shouldn't miss out on Clarksburg's expression.

5420 South River Road, Clarksburg; (916) 882-1000. www.minersleap.com. Tasting room hours: Noon-6 p.m. Friday-Saturday. Fee: \$5.

BOGLE WINERY

Wine to try: 2014 Reserve Petite Sirah (\$24). Being one of the first grapes planted by the Bogles, Petite Sirah is considered Clarksburg's "heritage" grape. The 2014 vintage, sourced from the Bogles' Sutter Ranch, is one that will take your palate on a journey, first bursting with jammy dark fruits, then toward a savory herbaceous mid-palate, finishing with plush tannins and lingering hints of cacao.

37783 County Road 144, Clarksburg; (916) 744-1092. www.boglewinery.com. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Free.

OLD SUGAR MILL

Wines to try: Fourteen wineries have tasting rooms in the 1935 beet processing facility.

35265 Willow Ave., Clarksburg, (916) 744-1615, www.oldsugarmill.com. Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily (tasting room hours vary).

burg community.

During my visit, Julie poured a full lineup of her current releases, which range from the crisp Clarksburg Chenin Blanc to the hearty Napa Cabs. However, she seemed to take personal pride in the 2013 Beverly's Legacy, a melting-pot blend of Zinfandel, Syrah, Tempranillo, Grenache, Mouvedre and Petite Sirah named in honor of the woman who got the Russells "into grapes."

Loyal Miner is another Clarksburg vintner with winemaking in his blood. His great-grandfather, Loyal Aubrey Miner, was a bootleg winemaker in the 1920s. While majoring in history at UC Davis, known for its viticulture and enology program, he took a wine appreciation class. "I remember thinking *I really like this*. Ever since then, I've wanted to make wine." Now a successful partner in his own law firm, he finally made his dream a reality when he opened Miner's Leap in 2013.

This is truly a boutique operation. Miner makes more than 13 single-varietal wines along with several blends in lots that never exceed 100 cases. Limited production allows him to experiment with grapes from other wine regions more frequently. This means a taste of Miner's Leap will be different on each visit.

The outdoor tasting room was a bit chilly for Miner and me during my windy winter visit. Luckily, he stocks a box with wool blankets for just such an occasion. Though the red wines also seemed to be affected by the cold atmosphere (the Zinfandel and Petit Verdot refused to open up), his Lodi Albariño was perfectly enjoyable — the proper balance of crisp acidity, a creamy mouthfeel and beautiful floral aromatics.

Miner loves to call in and entertain the crowd. The century-old barn that sits on the property now houses the



indoor-outdoor tasting room. It's eclectically decorated with art from Cabo San Lucas (Miner's home away from home) and "Hotel California" memorabilia ("Obviously, I like the Eagles," he says). The tasting room patio overlooks an outdoor area that calls to mind a beach resort, complete with palm trees, lounge chairs, and a small stage for local bands, wedding ceremonies and, once a month, church services.

The newest addition is an even larger event space just a few yards from the tasting room, able to accommodate up to 500 guests — perfect for the summer concert series Miner has in the works. This summer, Miner's Leap will also plant its first estate vineyard plantings, which will include Chenin Blanc and Petite Sirah.

The Bogle family — the major wine-maker in town — has been farming this slice of Yolo County since the

mid-1800s, primarily as a seed-corn grower. It wasn't until the 1960s that Warren Bogle, looking for a crop he wouldn't need to sow each year, planted his initial 20 acres of vines — 10 acres of Chenin Blanc and 10 acres of Petite Sirah.

"He was the first to plant (grapes) in Clarksburg," says granddaughter Jody Bogle, director of public relations for Bogle Vineyards.

Today, Bogle Vineyards farms more than 1,600 acres of grapes with estate-owned vineyards throughout California. Although this is by no means a small operation, it's a family business through and through. Grandchildren Ryan, Jody and Warren Bogle have their hands in all aspects of the business, from tasting room hospitality to vineyard management.

"We are farmers at heart," says Bogle. "We feel very blessed to get to do what we love every day."

That sense of family extends to the visitor's experience. While I tasted a few current releases and futures (the estate was having a barrel-sampling event that day), my host, "CC," toured me through the quaint tasting room. He pointed out photos of the Bogles dating back to those pre-grape-farming days and a topographic map illustrating the Clarksburg terroir.

The Bogle pioneering spirit seems to endure to this day with the few family-run wineries recently planting their roots in Clarksburg soil. Though small and virtually unrecognized by the dominant wine regions, Clarksburg's vintners see the potential of their surroundings. Their hard work in the vineyards and hospitality in the tasting room truly make Clarksburg a worthwhile wine-tasting travel destination.

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