

# WEEKEND JOURNAL

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

## TASTINGS

# On the Wine Trail

*As vineyard tourism soars, Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher visit 100 Napa-Sonoma wineries. Their guide to seven-course tastings, Persian fantasies and avoiding the crowds.*

**T**he small sign along crowded Route 29 in Napa Valley said "Salvestrin Vineyard and Winery. Open Today." So we drove in, past an oasis of fruit trees and a blur of playing children, and found ourselves the only people in the tasting room. After we sampled a lovely red wine, the young woman behind the counter said, "This would be even better with food—in fact, you want to see?" With that, she bounded out of the tasting room and led us outside, where we each picked a perfectly ripe, warm-from-the-sun cherry tomato, popped them into our mouths and then again sipped the wine, which was indeed even more delicious. Well, of course it was.

One of the questions we are asked most often is which wineries to visit in the Napa and Sonoma wine regions, so we spent more than two weeks traveling 1,000 miles around Wine Country and anonymously visiting almost (*Please Turn to Page W4*)

**When you come back down, find Larkmead Lane so you can go across to the Silverado Trail. On Larkmead Lane, drop into Frank Family Vineyards and taste some sparkling wine. It's one of the ever-fewer tasting rooms in Napa that doesn't charge a tasting fee and one of the few serving a sparkler, which will taste very good about now.**

**The staff is friendly and the setting historic. Years ago, when it was the site of the Hanns Kornell winery, Hanns Kornell himself poured us his sparklers. This is the only place we visited with a cat stretched out on the tasting-room bar. We're suckers for that.**