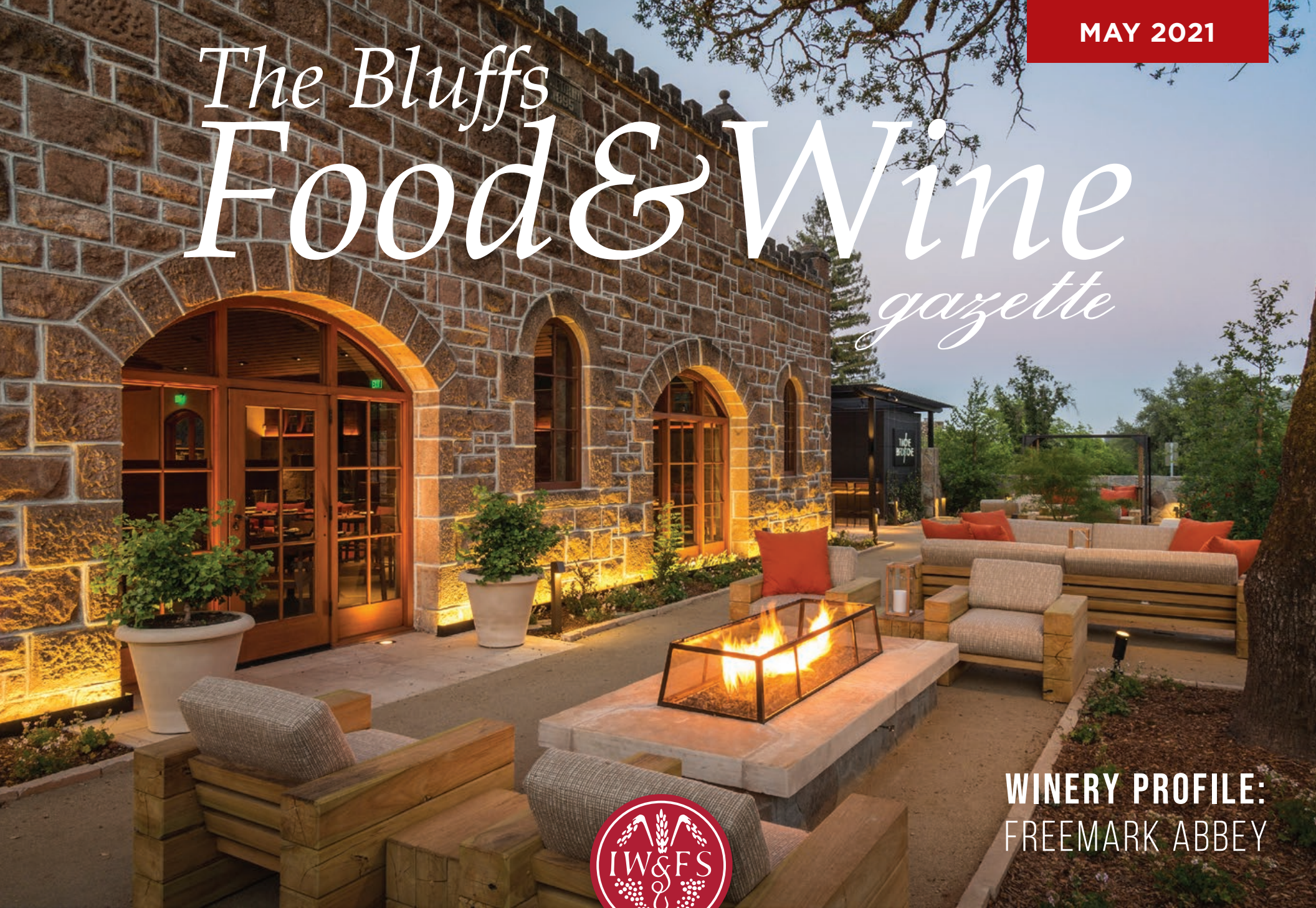


MAY 2021

The Bluffs **Food & Wine** *gazette*



WINERY PROFILE:
FREEMARK ABBEY

ALSO INSIDE • Event Report: Are You a Master Somm?? 801 Chophouse at the Paxton

*Freemark Abbey,
Photo courtesy of
[twitter.com/
freemarkabbey](https://twitter.com/freemarkabbey)*



EDITOR'S

CORNER

I love the fact that the CB Branch has so many events with widely different wine themes. The different twists make you think. And when you remove the label and taste blind, it makes you think even harder. You begin to rely on your wine learning that you have gleaned from tasting many bottles of wine. You have only the visual and palate clues available. You are vulnerable to embarrassment, but in the presence of friends, it is a safe place to learn. Your table companions were your support group, because they are in the same boat as you. So, tasting like a Somm gave participants the feel of what it would be like to take the tasting portion of the Somm test. The written portion? The event didn't touch on that. Let's say there is a lot of reading you have to do. Then you have to sweat out whether the test will pick an obscure wine area, like Hungary or Croatia and ask about soil conditions.



“HE HAD A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY, BUT IT WAS NEVER FULLY DEVELOPED.”

— IT'S TIME FOR SOME LEXOPHILES

One of the wines we enjoyed at the 801 Chophouse / Somm event was **Freemark Abbey**. I had not tried one in years. Why? I can't say, except for you don't hear much about Abbey in the press anymore. Their big moment in the sun was when they were included in the American lineup against the French during the Judgment of Paris event in 1976. That some American wineries beat out the French was huge news at the time. And all the judges were French! Judge Odette Kahn was so incensed at the outcome that she demanded her ballot back (she didn't get it) and later criticized the event. Both Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon were involved, and the USA came out first on each of these categories. It was a cause célèbre in the American wine press. Although closed during Prohibition, Freemark Abbey was one of the few early wineries that was resurrected after that government made catastrophe. That's when they began calling themselves Freemark Abbey. Check out the story. It's an interesting one.

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You can also access the Branch Recipe file by clicking: https://issuu.com/omaha-publications/docs/iwfs_cb_council_bluffs_recipes.

Cheers! 🍷

Tom Murnan

Cover photo: Freemark Abbey. Photo courtesy of studio-321.com.



EVENT REPORT

ARE YOU A MASTER SOMM?? 801 CHOPHOUSE AT THE PAXTON

Story and Photos by Tom Murnan

So you think you have it in you to be a Master Somm?? An intriguing idea I'm sure. But after watching the first Somm movie, I thought achieving this degree would scare you to death with all the study and complete devotion towards one goal it takes to get the Master Sommelier distinction. In the movie, one of the three characters you thought for sure would get the nod in fact failed. Where does that **Dave Thrasher** get such fiendish ideas? Is he an educator or the Marquis de Sade? And he seems like such a nice guy! LOL. Well, my official Gazette pronouncement is that we simply don't get enough exposure to different wines in our station in life, so this was going to be rugged, and we shouldn't feel too bad if we didn't identify everything correctly. We were given no advanced clues to help us along. It's not like we are tasting 50 wines a week from wholesalers eager to show you their portfolios. We fear we could be like that 3rd guy in the Somm movie, shot down and on the verge of despair, like Sisyphus forever trying to roll that boulder up the hills of Hades and eternally having it come back down.

That being said, it was certainly an interesting challenge. If nothing else, you came away with a fresh appreciation of the Somm who can dissect and correctly identify wines blind. We had a nice group of 34, with 7 being guests.

Mercifully, we started out with some food and quaffing wines first. I always find the Lobster Corn Dogs unique and so tasty. Hard to eat just one. The Mustard sauce is a perfect condiment to bring out the flavor. Made of mustard, mayonnaise, and 801 Sauce, sugar, raisins, Worcestershire sauce, beef stock, soy sauce, apple vinegar, garlic, and onions. It's a pretty complex sauce. The shrimp were huge with their own sauce, and the calamari interesting as well. Quaffers were from the cellar, but I think we could have used one more bottle of white for the ladies.

Then we sat down to find out how little we knew. I'm just kidding of course. Really, it was a very interesting exercise. My whole table was weighing in on what they thought each wine was. We did better on the Whites, with two correct. The reds were a bit more problematic. We just got one red right. But counting all the tables, we named most of the wines. Sometimes we got the grape right, but the place wrong.

Brad Marr was our moderator and actual Somm candidate. He would impart flavor profiles attributed to the various wines. Like Riesling, which has a petroleum nose, some botrytis notes since it was from Alsace, not Germany, ginger and saffron. Wine number 3 we universally knew it was Chardonnay. Turns out it was from Pouilly Fuisse in Burgundy. It had a mineral tone, pineapple and lemons. The malolactic fermentation gave

it a churned butter, sour cream flavor, but it comes in the finish in French Chardonnay, not as a dominant note as in California Chardonnays.

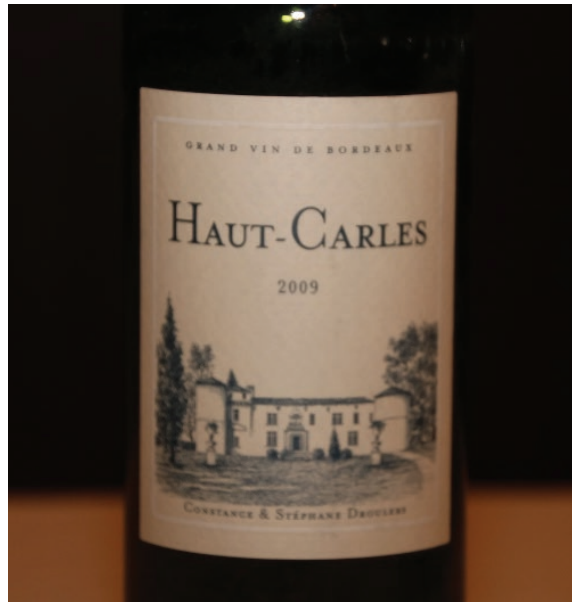
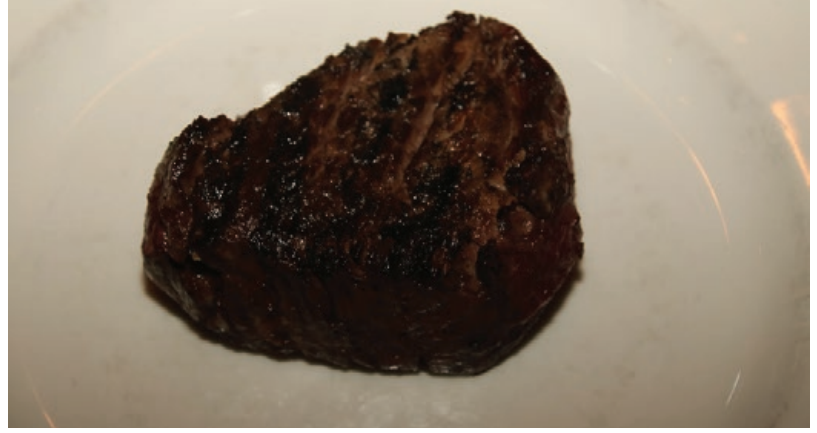
We then went to the reds. We were all over the place on our thoughts of wine number 4. Brad led the discussion. It was medium bodied, thin skinned with red fruits (cherries, cranberries, red licorice tone). It was revealed as an Australian Grenache. **Shelli Klemke** picked that one out. Wine number 5. We all decided it was from the old world. Many thought it was from Italy. On red wines, they can be ripe, under ripe or stewed. Plums, or cherries you would put in a pie. This wine had stewed flavors, which indicates age. A herbaeous touch. The wine used 100% American oak, unusual for an European wine. You get tones of dill, coconut, and a sweet spiciness that suggests American oak. It was a Tempranillo from Rioja. The last red we decided came from the new world. Brad said it had a spiciness tone to it, black fruits (blackberries, black cherry) and a little touch of dill and coconut. It was a Zinfandel from Dry Creek, Sonoma. The winery uses American oak.

The take away from all this is how a Somm analyzes and breaks down the flavor profiles, textures, tannins and nose. Of course, if you have limited exposure to all this, it makes it very much harder. ▶















◀ So, our 6 mystery wines were:

WHITES

1. Domaine Wachau Federspiel Terrasen Gruner Veltiner 2019;
2. Hugel Estate Riesling Alsace 2014;
3. Domaine Guerrin et Fils Pouilly-Fuisse La Marechaude [Chardonnay] 2018;

REDS

4. d'Arenberg Derelect Vineyard Grenache 2016;
5. R. Lopez de Heredia Rioja Vina Tondonia Reserva 2008;
6. Ridge East Bench Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma 2018

Dinner started with a **Salad of Mixed Greens & Goat Cheese with Lemon Vinaigrette** was a nice palate cleanser after our battery of tasting wines. We accompanied this with a **Domaine des Côtes Blanches Sancerre 2019**. Sancerre, of course, hails from the upper Loire River valley in France. The appellation uses Sauvignon Blanc exclusively and is known for its flinty taste and bright acidity. I noticed just a touch of grassiness and its delightful mineral notes. A good match for the salad.

Our Entrée was **Prime Filet Mignon** done to your liking. This was served with **Caramelized Baby Carrots, Blue Cheese Potatoes, French Green Beans**. These sides all came out at once. We had two sauces at our disposal: **Beef Demi-Glace** and **Bearnaise**. My steak was perfectly done (I asked for rare) with a nice browning on the outside and cool red on the inside. It was the essence of beefy flavor.

Two wines were paired with the entrée. The Haut-Carles Fronsac 2009 was composed of 90% Merlot, and the rest Malbec and Cabernet Franc. Fronsac is a minor appellation just outside of the Bordeaux

area, near St. Emilion and Pomerol. They are mostly all Merlot based wines and can be good quality for the price. It was intense and concentrated with black fruit flavors and a bit tannic. Freemark Abbey Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2012 was our second red. Made of 75 % Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest the typical Bordeaux mix of grapes. Elegant and smooth with the steak, it was well balanced and the essence of Cabernet Sauvignon.

Dessert was a challenge to **Chef Ivan Dondego**. As you may know, a souffle waits for no one, meaning once they are ready, they must be eaten lest their crown falls and the souffle implodes. Doing 34 souffles at once was a challenge since they have to be started in the oven about 25 minutes before delivery to tableside. **Our Grand Marnier Souffle** was brought out with **Vanilla Crème Anglaise**. Beautifully presented with a high dome, it was still warm, which made all the difference in bringing out the intensity. The vanilla and orange flavors went perfectly with the Doisy-Daene Sauternes 2009. A great ending to a wonderful steak house meal.

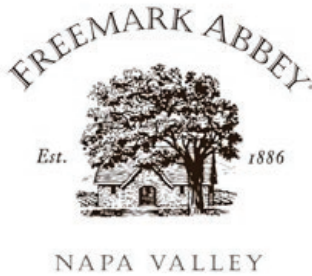
Thanks to **Chef Ivan Dondego**, who has been in his position for 6 years, for crafting a very tasty meal. Assistant General Manager **Brad Marr** provided great wine education for our blind tasting, giving us a real feel for what it would be like to take the tasting portion of the Advanced Sommelier degree. Our servers gave us prompt and attentive service. Thanks as well to **Tabitha and Dave Thrasher**. And yes, although it is humbling to have no advance clue to what you are drinking, it was a very interesting and educational theme. Imagine the stress if you were taking the Somm test. We were just having fun. I take back all those things I said about you, Dave, being the Marquis de Sade! It is good to have a challenge. 🍷



Ted Williams,
winemaker emeritus,
with Kristy Melton,
winemaker as of 2020.

WINERY PROFILE: FREEMARK ABBNEY

BY TOM MURNAN



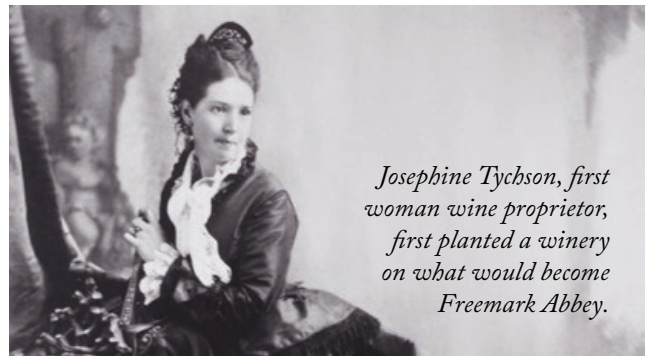
One of the wines we had on our 3/7/2021 Want to be a Somm?? event at 801 Chophouse was the 2012 Freemark Abbey Cabernet. Freemark Abbey is a name I've heard of for a long time. So, I thought it was appropriate to do a Winery Profile on Freemark.

The first thing most people think about Freemark Abbey is that it was included in the famous Stephen Spurrier



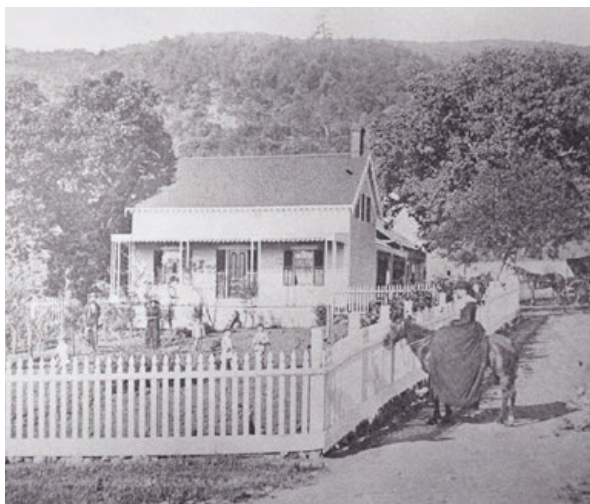
1976 Judgment of Paris wines

Judgment of Paris of 1976. But the winery was actually founded in 1886 under a different name and ownership. At that time there were only a few illustrious Napa Valley winery names: Inglenook, Beringer, Charles Krug and Schramsburg (sparkling).



Josephine Tychson, first woman wine proprietor, first planted a winery on what would become Freemark Abbey.

Josephine Tychson came west from Philadelphia with husband John, who was ailing from tuberculosis. In 1886, the couple bought 150 acres a few miles north of St. Helena, CA from a sea captain and planted Riesling, Zinfandel and "Burgundy." Then John committed suicide. Josephine decided to make her own wine and named the winery **Tychson Cellars**. She became the **first woman proprietor of a winery in California**. She constructed a redwood winery, and with the aid of her foreman, produced about 30,000 gallons of wine. But then in 1893 **phylloxera** attacked the vineyard. She sold the winery to the foreman who sold it to **Antonio Forni** a year later. She built a house just across the road and would often ride her horse through her former property.



Josephine Tychson bought a white house across the road from her former winery and would ride around the area.



Lombarda Cellars 1898

Forni was from Italy and in 1894 named his winery **Lombarda Cellars**, after his home area. He built stone buildings to house the winery from a local quarry. These building can still be seen today. Forni made Chianti and other Italian bottlings, much of it shipped to the east coast where there were numerous Italian immigrants. But disaster struck in the form of **Prohibition**, and Forni was reduced to selling altar wine. He was forced to close around 1929.

Ten year later, when Prohibition was over, three real estate salesmen bought the property. Their names were Charles **Freeman**, **Mark Foster**, and Albert "**Abbey**" Ahern. The name Freemark Abbey, then, is an amalgamation of all three names, and has remained under this name, despite future purchasers, until the present time. They sold a variety of wine, including Cabernet Sauvignon and 'Sauternes.' They would also purchase grapes from the Boché and Sycamore vineyards. They sold their wine mostly in the San Francisco area in the 1940s and 1950s. But one thing they did was ahead of its time. They opened a '**Sampling Room**,' the forerunner of modern day tasting rooms. Thus they promoted Napa Valley Hospitality that has exploded into today's wine hospitality industry. But once Abbey Ahern died in 1959, the winery discontinued operations. ▶



1939 the winery just reopened from the Prohibition closure and was renamed Freemark Abbey. The photo is of the Lombardia Cellars.



1949 Freemark Abbey Sampling Room



Ted Williams, winemaker emeritus, with Kristy Melton, winemaker as of 2020.

The seven partners who purchased Freemark Abbey in 1967. From left to right: Dick Heggie, Brad Webb, Bill Jaeger, Frank "Laurie" Wood, Jim Warren, Chuck Carpy, John Bryan



Albert "Abbey" Ahern, one of the three original partners who founded Freemark Abbey.

◀ In 1966, a group of 7 investors bought Freemark Abbey, headed by **Jim Carpy**. Their first vintage featured a 1967 Cabernet Sauvignon. By 1969, They produced the Cabernet Sauvignon that was submitted to the **1976 Judgment of Paris** event. Even though they came in 10th (or last) for the red California wines, and 6th for the whites, it put Freemark Abbey on the international wine map. Freemark Abbey was the only winery who submitted both a red and a white wine. About that time, **Ted Edwards** became winemaker and stayed with the winery for 40 years.

In 1970, Freemark Abbey was one of the earliest Napa vineyard designated wines with their **Bosché Cabernet Sauvignon**. It remains their highest demand bottling. In 1950, John Bosché (pronounced Bo-SHAY) planted 12 acres to Cabernet Sauvignon. He asked John Carpy to make a small amount of wine for his own use. The wine was outstanding and the partnership has continued to this day with a portion of Bosché going to Freemark Abbey.

In 1980, they began bottling fruit from the **Sycamore Vineyard** from the Rutherford Bench as a designated vineyard.

Carpy's partnership dissolved in 2001, and it was sold to **The Legacy Estate Group**, which over-extended their holdings by buying too many high end wineries. They were forced into bankruptcy in 2005. By 2006, they were added to the **Jackson Family Wines** empire, who is the current owner. Besides Freemark Abbey, the \$97 million acquisition included Arrowood, Byron, Murphy-Goode, Robert Pecota, and Quintessa.

Today, the winery produces a bevy of different wines. Cabernet Sauvignon is king, starting with the Bosché and Sycamore vineyard designations, both from Rutherford. Then comes the regular Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa, Rutherford, Spring Mountain, Mount Veeder, and Oakville. Red blends include Josephine's Red (named after foundress Tychson), Partners Blend, Restoration Red, and Ted's Red Blend, Napa Valley Malbec, Merlot, Merlot Bosché, and Stage Coach Merlot. Whites include Chardonnay from Napa, Howell Mountain and Los Carneros, a Viognier and a Sauvignon Blanc. They also make a Cask 86 Dessert Red Wine.

One interesting feature is their Library. This originated in the Jim Carpy days of the late 1960s when Freemark Abbey used to age wine for restaurants in their stone cellars. Consumers are able to contact the winery for a birth year or anniversary wine. 🍷



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21**

THE PRICE IS....RIGHT?

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Producers: Koesters & Goldsteins

**JUN.
05**

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LAKE THEME**

Catered by Pasta Amore

Martin cabin

Producers: Connie & Gary Martin

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