

OCTOBER 2020

The Bluffs *Food & Wine* *gazette*

INGLENOOK: NAPA'S
OLDEST WINERY
LOOKS TO RETURN TO
PREEMINENCE



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Followed by Weekend Wines for Dinner at Stokin' Goat • **Recipe:** Chef Andrew Loughrey's Seared Scallops with Meyer Lemon Cream, Wild Grains, and Garden Cress • **Winery Profile:** Château Laroque



courtesy of hugel.com

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Greetings to all;

Our September event was hosted by Dave and Tabitha Thrasher and Steve and Patti Hipple at the Dolce. A fun highlight of the evening was to taste four different wine and compare our estimates of the wines' longevity to the Wine Spectator's and Wine Advocate's drink-by estimates. An interesting array of food and wines followed for a fabulous evening. Thank you to Tabitha, Dave, Patti and Steve.

During the last month, I have been reading more about the influence of the wine's "terroir" on the unique flavors that a wine develops. "Terroir" is commonly described as including the soil, climate, vineyard orientation, insects and microbes to which the grapes are exposed. Cultural practices for growing and processing grapes are today included in an expanded definition of "terroir." A recent article in ScienceNews suggests adding other crops that surround the vineyards as a part of the "terroir" of the vineyard. A good example is "garrigue," the wild underbrush in Provence. So, you may find that the Cabernet that you are sipping has an aroma of green peppers which ripened at the same time as the grapes.

The article in ScienceNews is entitled "How does a crop's environment shape a food's smell and taste?" (<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/terrior-food-crops-environment-smell-taste>) Consider adding this to your reading list.

Be safe and be well. 🍷

Connie Martin

Cover Photo: Historic Inglenook winery designed by architect William Mooser, who also designed the Far Niente house.

"Haunted French pancakes give me the crêpes."

IT'S TIME FOR SOME LEXOPHILES

EDITOR'S

CORNER

I loved the theme for our August event at Stokin' Goat. This was **David Thrasher's** brain child: compare Weekday wines with Weekend wines. During the work week, we tend not to open what I call company wine. We mostly save the good stuff for the weekend (unless we happen to invite someone over before that time). Besides scoping out some good weekday wines for us to know, the sit down tasting was also a lesson in wine identification / humility. But don't be put off if you got some (or all) wrong. Just try to summarize what you learned and carry it forward to the next situation. This was the first time I have tried Stokin' Goat, and I was surprised at how good the cuisine was under the helm of Australian born chef Andrew Loughrey. It was a great time and felt good to get together with all our friends in this time of masks and COVID restrictions.



As I just mentioned, food was quite good at Stokin' Goat. I loved the rabbit as well as the seared scallops with Meyer lemon cream. I asked **Chef Andrew Loughrey** for the recipe for the scallops because I didn't think saddle of rabbit was very easy to find in the grocery stores. He agreed to provide it. This will also go into our CB Branch recipe book.

One of the wines served blind in the tasting was **Château Laroque**, a French St Emilion Grand Cru that is predominantly Merlot based. Plus it is a bargain by Bordeaux standards. I thought you would enjoy reading about it so there is a Profile story about Laroque you can peruse.

Our final "weekend" dinner wine at Stokin' Goat was the well known **Inglénook** brand from Napa Valley. I believe it is the oldest winery (founded 1879) in the Napa Valley AVA, and has quite the story to tell. Ever since it was sold to a big brand company, quality dropped like a stone until movie director Francis Ford Copola became obsessed with returning Inglenook to its glory days in the 1940s and 1950s. Check out the story.

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Skoal! 🍷

Tom Murnan



**IF YOU JUMP
OFF A BRIDGE
IN PARIS, YOU
ARE IN SEINE."**

— IT'S TIME FOR
SOME LEXOPHILES

EVENT REPORT:

Week Night Wine Tasting Followed by Weekend Wines for Dinner at Stokin' Goat

STORY BY TOM MURNAN

PHOTOS BY TOM MURNAN & WAYNE MARKUS

It was an intriguing idea our hosts had: What is the quality level of those wines that sell for \$30 to \$40 dollars? How do they compare to high end wines? I don't know about you, but I am weary of paying California prices for a bottle of wine, which seem to **start** at \$65 nowadays. So a fine bottle of wine you might drink without company, for a reasonable price, is always a great find. We would have 5 Bordeaux blend wines to sample blind. We knew the wines being poured, just not which order they were arranged for the tasting. Stokin' Goat was also a new venue to me, and by the looks of their wine inventory, they seem fairly serious about good wine. It turns out, I was also impressed with their Australian chef, Andrew Loughery, who hails from Perth. We had 40 people sign up, which included 5 guests but 3 no-show members.

After a meet 'n greet, we enjoyed quaffing wines and a charcuterie station that included prosciutto, salami, and one other sliced meat, along with a Dubliner cheese, a blue cheese, goat cheese, and sliced baguettes and crackers, we all sat down for the tasting. The restaurant did it correctly. Masked staff members poured the wines, and served the type and amount of the appetizers you wanted, preventing guests from handling bottles and utensils and possibly passing on unwanted COVID infection.

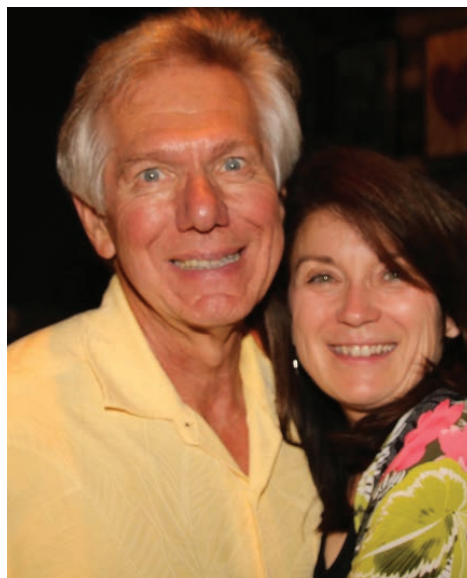
Not only were our tasting wines pre-poured and waiting for us at our assigned seating, but Dave Thrasher had used a **Breville Electric Hyper-Speed Decanter**, a pricey gadget that can decrease the amount of time of decanting from 1 hour to 1 minute using 90% pure oxygen.



Preparing the wines is really an essential step because without advanced breathing (and removal of unwanted sediment), the wine simply would be unready when you sat down to taste. This was especially important considering that the youngest wine was a 2016 and the oldest 2014. Lack of advanced breathing can handicap your enjoyment and ability to identify wine's nuances. Thanks for taking the time and care to do this for us, Dave. It is a lot of extra work but well worth it to have the wines show themselves at their best.

Our mission was to identify which mystery Bordeaux blend wine was which. There were two Bordeaux châteaux, one Merlot based and one Cabernet Sauvignon based wine. Regarding the new world wines' origins, there were two California bottlings and one from Washington. They included:

- **Rutherford Hill Barrel Select Red Blend 2015**, Napa, 77% Merlot, 14% Cab, 9% Cabernet Franc, \$30.
- **Châteaux Laroque 2016**, a St Emilion Grand Cru, primarily Merlot based, \$35.
- **Northstar Cabernet Sauvignon 2014** a Washington 100% Cab, \$35.
- **Château Haut-Bergey 2015**, Pessac-Leognan Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, \$30.
- **Raymond Reserve Selection Cabernet Sauvignon 2016** Napa, 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, rest Bordeaux blend, \$35-\$40. ▶















◀ We had a half hour to exercise our best vinous judgment. When the answers were revealed, it was in the order I just entered above (not the way we received them). When Dave asked which **wine we liked the best**, there was a tie of about 15 who liked the Northstar and Raymond the best. About 7 liked the Rutherford Hill. As a group we must all favor west coast red Cabs because neither French Bordeaux received a liked-best vote. Très interessant, as the French would say.

Now, it was onward to dinner and the weekend wines. Our First Course was **Seared Scallops with Meyer Lemon Cream, Wild Grains, and Garden Cress**. This was quite tasty. I thought the scallops were more savory than usual. The Wild Grain turned out to be wild rice, barley, red and white quinoa and wheat berries, those small round objects in with the blend. The Meyer Lemon Cream accented the scallops nicely. I asked for the recipe and the Chef consented graciously. You will find it below. After all those red blends, I was relieved to be having a **Ramey Fort Ross - Seaview Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 2016**. This wine was a perfect match for the bivalve mollusk: pronounced oakiness, buttery, full and deep.

The Second Course was my favorite: **Rabbit Saddle, Guanciale, Grain Mustard and Leeks**. The rabbit was exceptionally flavorful, not gamy or bland like many rabbit dishes are. **Guanciale** is an Italian style of cured, dry-aged bacon made from hog jowls. Perhaps this was the secret ingredient that turned ordinary rabbit into a gourmet treat. The Grain Mustard sauce was a spot-on perfect sauce for the meat. I did not see any leeks, unless it was used in the preparation of the above, but the garnish was a piece of broccoli, which added color to an otherwise beige kind of dish. Pairing a Pinot Noir with the mild flavors of the rabbit was simply the right thing to do. **Three Sticks Price Family Estates Pinot Noir 2017** was our Boutique selection. This was an noticeably deep wine, so earthy and well balanced that it was attention getting. An impressive choice.

The Third Course was **Herb Crusted Lamb Loin with Maitake Mushroom, Pomme Puree and Rosemary Jus**. The lamb was perfectly cooked, medium rare and juicy, redolent of lovely lamb earthiness and flavor. The pomme puree, or pureed potatoes as they say in Nebraska, was enriched with cream, which made it a rich contrast to the meat. Rosemary Jus was a thickened beef stock with rosemary flavors coming out on top of the flavor explosion. The addition of rosemary was a thoughtful culinary touch.

This course was accompanied by one of the great heritage wineries in Napa Valley, **Inglenook**. After reaching its height in the 1940s and 1950s, the winery experienced years of decline. New owner Francis Ford Coppola's obsession has been to return it to greatness. We had the **Inglenook Cabernet Sauvignon 2014**. I found it to be very Bordeaux like, very well balanced with the lamb, with mild tannins and cassis flavors. Quite nice overall.

Dessert found us with **Cheesecake made of goat cheese. Lemon honey** was swirled crescent shaped on one side of the cake, sprinkled with **Pistachios**. A nice dollop of **Spiced Plum** completed the presentation and added red color. The lemon honey had a great affinity to the Château Raymond-Lafon Sauternes 2007, which was unctuous and had the essence of honey in its own flavors. It was high in acidity which kept it from being cloying and uninteresting. Another great food and wine pairing.

Thanks so much to **Executive Chef Andrew Loughrey** for deciding to spend some time in Omaha Nebraska during his world travels. We appreciate your expertise. The wait staff was timely and helpful. Thanks to **Dave and Tabitha Thrasher** for organizing this event. Casual vs. connoisseur wines was an intriguing theme that kept us all captivated, even if we might have gotten every wine incorrect in the tasting! 🍷



Recipe

CHEF ANDREW LOUGHREY'S SEARED SCALLOPS WITH MEYER LEMON CREAM, WILD GRAINS, & GARDEN CRESS



The recipe for the scallops is per individual serving. Garnish with what you have. The dish we tried had Garden Cress, but you are just adding color, so use what is at hand. The Five grain Blend and Meyer Cream sauce yields are for up to 6 servings depending on how generous a portion you give. You will probably have to go to a specialty store to find the grains. 🍷 ➡

Five Grain Blend

1 Shallot
1 oz Garlic
1 ½ Cup Chicken stock
½ cup White wine
Good pinch of Chive
1 cup Cooked Barley
1 cup Cooked Wild rice
1 cup Cooked Wheat berries
1 cup Cooked White quinoa
1 cup Cooked Red quinoa
Good pinch of Parsley
Good splash of Olive oil

PROCEDURE

1. Sweat shallots and garlic in a little olive oil, until fragrant.
2. Add grain blend and toast/fry lightly over medium heat.
3. Add your white wine, chicken stock with a touch of salt and pepper. And cook out until grains are al dente. Stirring occasionally.
4. Before you serve stir in parsley and chives.
5. Adjust seasonings to desired tastes.
6. Keep warm until ready to serve.

Bulk Hem Sauce Meyer Lemon Butter

1 lb Butter
½ cup White wine
3 ea Meyer lemons
2 ea Shallot chopped
2 cloves Garlic
½ bunch Parsley
½ cup Heavy cream
Salt & Pepper to taste

PROCEDURE

1. Sauté shallots, garlic until fragrant.
2. Add parsley, white wine and Meyer lemon juice.
3. Reduce for 5 min.
4. Add heavy cream and bring to a slow boil.
5. Diced up butter, add one or two pieces of butter at a time whisking until each has melted and incorporated.
6. Once last butter has been added strain through fine sieve and set aside till needed but do not cool or once reheated it will break!

Mains Fish Scallops

3 ea Dry sea scallops
2 oz Meyer lemon butter
4 oz Five grain blends
Garnish your way.

PROCEDURE

1. Sear the scallops until nicely golden brown, med rare, turn and rest and keep warm in pan until plating.
2. Bring 5 grain blend up to temperature.
3. To plate, make small pile of 5 grain blend, Arrange scallops in your desired plating, drizzle Meyer lemon butter sauce. Finish with your favorite garnish.

INGLENOOK: NAPA'S OLDEST WINERY LOOKS TO RETURN TO PREEMINENCE

BY TOM MURNAN

Dave and Tabitha Thrasher hosted our August 16th event with a theme of a sit down Weeknight wine tasting followed by Weekend wines for dinner. Our entree course featured a Inglenook Cabernet Sauvignon 2014. So this was what I call 'company' wine, something you pull out when having guests. Inglenook is one of the oldest wineries in Napa Valley with a rich history.

Gustav Nybom emigrated from Finland to California. In 1864, at the age of 22, he commanded a ship bound for Alaska, where he made his fortune in fur trading. He estab-

lished the Alaska Commercial Company in 1868, continuing to sell furs. In 1871, the son-in-law of George Yount (who founded Yountville) bought a 78 acre farm and gave it a Scottish name, **Inglenook**, which means **cozy corner** in English. In 1873, Gustav got married to a native Californian, Susan Shingleberger, and changed his name to **Niebaum**. By 1879, Niebaum bought Inglenook and the adjoining 440 acre farm. He had become a millionaire by then, worth 10 million dollars. In 1881, Gustav hired architect William Mooser, to build the iconic chateau and winery. The next year was Niebaum's first vintage, 80,000 gallons of wine were produced. In 1883, they dug aging cellars into the hill side near the mansion. By 1884, they were producing 125,000 gallons of wine. The winery's reputation grew, and in 1891, Inglenook wine was served to President Benjamin Harrison at a Presidential Banquet in San Francisco. In 1906, the Alaska Commercial Company was destroyed by the devastating earthquake, but Inglenook was spared in Rutherford. In 1908, Captain Gustav



John Daniel Jr.

Niebaum died at the age of 66. Winemaking was stopped until 1911. Gustav's nephew **John Daniel Jr.** moved to Inglenook when his mother died and he learned winemaking. Prohibition closed the winery in 1919 and drained their casks. They began selling fresh grapes to home winemakers, which was legal. Prohibition ended in 1933, and the winery immediately resumed making wine under the talented winemaker Carl Bubndsch and the visionary John Daniel Jr. ▶

*Gustav
Niebaum*



◀ The heyday of Inglenook began when nephew John Daniel purchased the winery in 1939. Daniels and his new winemaker, George Deuer were absolutely dedicated to quality and made some of the most impressive and long lived wines in California. His motto was “Pride, not Profits.” He even declassified the 1945 and 1947 vintages, selling them in bulk, making a great financial sacrifice, a practice unheard of in California at the time when a bottle of wine might sell for \$1 or \$2. Daniels is scarcely remembered now, but he was known for his exacting high winemaking standards. His Cabernet Sauvignon came from three vineyards: the Home Ranch, Napanook, and the old Niebaum estate.

At the time, Cabernet Sauvignon was not the preeminent grape variety of Napa. But Daniels was a pioneer in this respect and elevated Cabernet Sauvignon to the iconic grape variety of Napa Valley. He fashioned some of the greatest group of red wines ever made, according to the Wine Spectator. The winemaking records have been destroyed, but what is known is that there was little human intervention in the vineyard at that time, less technique and more what nature provided. The grapes were harvested when very ripe. Alcohol levels were around 14% (which indicates ripeness) but some percentage of alcohol was lost during fermentation in open tanks, which brought it down to 12.5 to 13%. The fermentation took place in large 800 to 1400 gallon tanks and then the wine was aged in them for three years. This reduced the risk of oxidation, essential for long lived wines. He rejected the use of small French barrels, like those being used at Beaulieu Vineyards, his neighbor. Daniels and Deuer were fanatical about cleanliness in an era that did not emphasize this, again resulting in long lived wines. They would

also add Zinfandel or Petite Sirah if they felt it improved the Cabernet Sauvignon by providing more body or deeper color. Daniel’s best wine as flagged **Cask**, since it came from upright casks, not barrels.

Due to financial troubles and low profits, Daniels sold Inglenook in 1964 to Allied Grape Growers, who became part of United Vintners, who was then purchased by Heublein in 1969. Instead of making Inglenook the jewel in their wine crown, as they had promised, they began making jug wine named Inglenook Navalle. Volume rose but quality dropped. Daniel died in 1970 a bitter man, disappointed by the demise of the once great winery. The Navalle brand hurt Inglenook’s image, so Heublein tried renaming it Inglenook Napa Valley, but that quality effort failed as well, and the Inglenook name was sold off to Canandaigua (now Constellation Brands).

Enter film director **Francis Ford Coppola**. He was haunted by the quality of the Inglenook heyday wines and wanted to restore the estate to its glory days. In 1975 he purchased the old John Daniel Jr. residence and began buying parcels of the Inglenook property as well. Twenty years later he was able to buy the Inglenook winery, restoring it along with the Daniel home. But he did not own the rights to the Inglenook name. So he called his estate Niebaum Coppola. His top wine was named Rubicon, after Julius Caesar’s crossing of the river in antiquity. Finally in 2011, Coppola purchased the rights to the Inglenook name, paying more than he did for the entire estate. He restored the name to Inglenook. Today Inglenook consists

of 1560 acres of the original Inglenook estate and the Niebaum mansion.

Coppola hired a French winemaker, Philippe Bascaules who worked at Château Margaux, the famous First Growth. Investments were made in a state of the art winemaking operation consistent with Coppola’s desire to restore Inglenook to America’s greatest wine estate. In 2016, Bascaules was called back to be managing director of Château Margaux. He gave up the day to day winemaking but assumed a consulting role. Besides Cabernet Sauvignon, Inglenook makes Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel. They also make Rhône varietals. Their white Rhône varietals carry the Blancaneaux label. The Syrah is called RC for Coppola’s son, Roman.

There is also Rubicon, its premier label for Cabernet Sauvignon. It is made in a leaner style as Coppola feels there are too many high alcohol fruit bomb California Cabs on the market.

In November 2000, a collector named Edward Lazarus held a retrospective tasting of 29 old vintages of Inglenook Cask, their top wine. The highest scoring wines were from the 1940s

and 1950s where the 1941 scored 97 (but in a 1989 Wine Spectator tasting, it scored a perfect 100), the 1958 scored 97 and the 1959 scored 95 as did the 1952. 🍷

Sources: <https://www.inglenook.com/Story/History>; <https://www.winespectator.com/articles/the-glory-that-was-inglenook-9404>; <https://www.winespectator.com/articles/inglenooks-winemaking-legacy-6321>; <https://www.winespectator.com/articles/the-ghosts-of-inglenooks-past-44859>



Francis Ford Coppola, current owner of Inglenook

Winery Profile: Château Laroque

BY TOM MURNAN



For our 8/23/2020 event, we had a blind tasting of 5 different “everyday” wines. The 2016 French wine Château Laroque was in the line up to identify. It sells in the \$35.00 range and thus was classified at the tasting as an everyday wine, even though it is a St. Emilion Grand Cru Classé.

Château Laroque dates back to the 12th century. One of its medieval structures still exist, the remnants of a

large tower, and some other areas, a hold-over from when the property was a defensive stronghold for the area. At 1483 acres, it was the largest estate of the St. Emilion area in the 12th century. As time went on, its size diminished. Today it consists of 151 acres under vines, with about 50 acres of forest and gardens. Of those 151 acres of vines, 67 acres are designated Grand Cru Classé, while the remainder vineyard area goes into their 2nd wine, Les Tours de Laroque, and a 3rd wine, Château Peymouton.

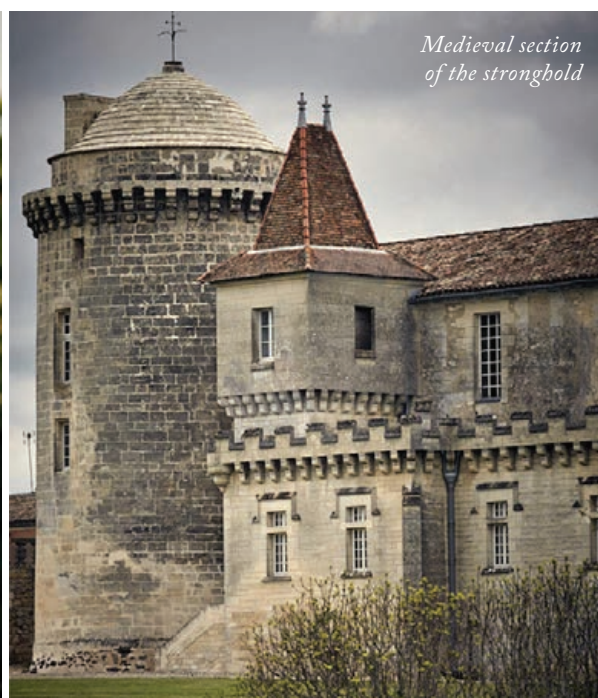
In the 17th century, the Marquis de Rochefort-Lavie built the magnificent Château we see today. In 1900, Laroque won a gold medal at the Paris Universal Exposition, mostly due to the efforts of

estate manager Paul Boisard who took Laroque to new heights at the end of the 19th century.

The estate gets its name from an imposing limestone plateau. Two main kinds of soil exist in the vineyards, one with pure Astéries limestone and another richer, red clay over limestone area. But all the types of limestone in the St. Emilion area can be found here: a limestone paradise as the Laroque website calls it. Since 2019, plantings have 88% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon vines. “Merlot on limestone gives the wine flesh, vivacity and layers of flavor, and Cabernet Franc which brings length on the palate and a fresh, lean finish” the web site says. ▶



Medieval tower ruin



Medieval section of the stronghold



The Marquis de Rochefort-Lavie's palace at Château Laroque

◀ The estate has been in the same family until the Great Depression in 1929. The property was sold in 1935 to the Beaumartin family who were descendants of the Marquis de Rochefort-Lavie. Wine production had stopped until the early 1950s, so when the first classification of St. Emilion wines first took place in 1955, there were only a few vintages to submit to the tribunal. Unlike the 1855 Classification of the Medoc which only changed once in 1973 to move Mouton Rothschild into the First Growth category, St. Emilion occasionally adjusts its classification list, dropping some and adding others. Actually, this is a much more logical system because it gets rid of the dead wood and rewards those who have improved. The Beaumartins have, in recent times, invested mightily in the Château. In 1962, the entire vineyard was replanted. They built a new winery where the wines are fermented in temperature controlled cement vats of various sizes to match the size of the various vineyard parcels. 50 % of the Grand Cru wine is aged in new oak barrels. A new aging chai was also constructed. After fifty years, parts of the vineyard are beginning to be replanted. Production of the grand vin is about 25,000 cases annually. The family hired David Suire as director in 2015, and he has raised the quality factor enormously. They were awarded a Grand Cru Classé designation in 2015. Wine ratings that used to be in the high 80s jumped to the early 90s starting in 2016.



Wines are fermented in these cobalt blue cement tanks

Château Laroque is a bargain in today's overheated Bordeaux market, especially considering it is a Grand Cru Classé wine. This may be because it has not been offered on the futures market, and has mostly been sold in France. But with the Grand Cru classification, the jump in quality and higher ratings from professional wine critics, that will likely soon change. 🍷

Sources: *Inside Bordeaux The châteaux, their wines and the terroir* by Jane Anson. Berry Bros. & Rudd Press 2020; <https://www.chateau-laroque.com/en/great-wines-going-back-centuries/>; <https://www.thewinecellarinsider.com/bordeaux-wine-producer-profiles/bordeaux-st-emilion/chateau-laroque-st-emilion-bordeaux-wine/>



UPCOMING COUNCIL BLUFFS BRANCH EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars!

OCT.
17

SPENCER'S FOR STEAKS & CHOPS

Harvest Dinner

Producers: Suzanne & Bob Kossow

NOV.
14

SPEZIA

California vs. Oregon Pinot Noir

Producers: Tom & Mary Murnan

DEC.
6

J. GILBERT'S RESTAURANT

Producers: Connie and Gary Martin

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