

TrailBlazer

Luna Vineyards revamps its tasting room to offer an elevated experience along Napa's Silverado Trail

by Meredith May

Luna Vineyards Winemaker Mike Drash is a trail blazer in the vineyards, creating the winery's high end red program focused on prized Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from the Napa Valley's premier hillside locations.

Even before legendary winemaker John Kongsgaard first put his signature on the wines of Luna Vineyards in the mid-to-late '90s, the Napa Valley was the crux of California's vinous society, and it remains even more so today.

While other Northern California appellations are lauded for their more rustic lifestyle, Napa's cultural core abounds with sophistication: Copia for arts and education; the Napa Valley Opera House for performance; River Walk for upscale shopping, living and lodging; in-city condominiums and housing for positive growth; and, of course, trend-setting restaurants and chefs to lead an upscale culinary movement.





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Housed in “Tiffany-like” cases, these artfully presented vignettes showcase extraordinary, high-end wine country products available for purchase. Food and wine accoutrements replace the baseball cap and tee shirt concept.

As an echo of the modern center of art and commerce into which downtown Napa has evolved, Mary Ann Tsai, President of Luna Vineyards, decided to revitalize the ambiance of her Silverado Trail tasting room through décor and, even further, through a more intimate setting for visitors. Developed by reputed design firm Ireko, the Italianate classicism of Luna’s new tasting room ideally responds to the winery’s roots producing Pinot Grigio, Sangiovese and Merlot on the property.

To mirror the expanding quality of Luna’s red wine program—including Howell Mountain Cabs—Tsai and designer Jim Rascoe sought out a novel approach to the tasting experience.

“The team at Luna made a conscious choice to recreate the tasting room to reflect the elevation of the wine program,” Jim Rascoe, one of Ireko’s partners tells THE TASTING PANEL. “It’s not unlike the marketplace developing out in a higher-

end mode, versus the old mass-market experience implemented by many commercial designers. We’ve structured a clubby, salon-like atmosphere conducive to having a one-on-one experience with the staff. Rather than only congregating around the bar, more intimate opportunities are offered, such as sitting outside on the patio or being served in the private Reserve Room where conversations and interaction with knowledgeable Luna team members can be stimulating and memorable.”

“We’re excited to host events for the trade and consumers,” points out Tsai, whose Reserve Room—adorned with a classically-vaulted Romanesque ceiling, hand-finished pigmented plaster walls and overscaled custom furnishings—hosts private tastings and food pairings, incorporating the winery’s finest pours, where guests, at least momentarily, live the ultimate Napa Valley dream. ■■

Luna Vineyards is at 2921 Silverado Trail in Napa Valley.



Private seating areas allow for intimate conversation.