

Goldeneye: Anderson Valley's most formal tasting experience

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Paul Coco and his friends drink on the patio at Goldeneye Winery, Calif., Monday, May 28, 2018.

Photo: Mason Trinca, Special to The Chronicle

Goldeneye is Anderson Valley's most formal tasting experience — though then again, this easygoing valley has a low bar for formality. The winery, named for the Goldeneye duck, is part of a group of duck-themed wineries; the company's most famous property is Duckhorn, in Napa Valley.

Fittingly, the Goldeneye tasting room seems to have taken a cue from the Napa hospitality playbook. You sit at a table, either indoors or (ideally) outdoors — it's kept warm even during the chillier months — and staff bring your flight of wine to you all at once. Stemless Burgundy glasses are arranged on top of little cards that provide information about each wine. Why stemless bowls? you'll ask. Swore one employee: Traditional stemware blows away in the wind.

The Goldeneye wines, mostly Pinot Noir, are at the pricier end for Anderson Valley, with the top Pinots retailing at \$100 or more. The tasting itself, however, is a good value: \$15 for six wines, plus a little dish of almonds and fruit delivered with your flight. It can be a nice, relaxing change of pace from the standing bars found at most of the other tasting rooms in the valley.

WHAT TO TRY: Goldeneye does not produce a Chardonnay, but its rosé of Pinot Noir (\$32) is light and floral, a great way to start a tasting. Its Pinot Noirs veer rich and heavier than some of their neighbors'. The standout is the Gowan Creek Vineyard (\$84), full-bodied but with a restrained fruit profile.

INSIDE INFO: Unless the gate is closed, visitors are free to wander from the tasting room patio into the vineyards. You might also consider leaving your car parked at Goldeneye while walking over to the Madrones complex, where you can visit the tasting rooms of Smith Story and Drew, plus have lunch at Stone and Embers.

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