

# COTTAGES & GARDENS

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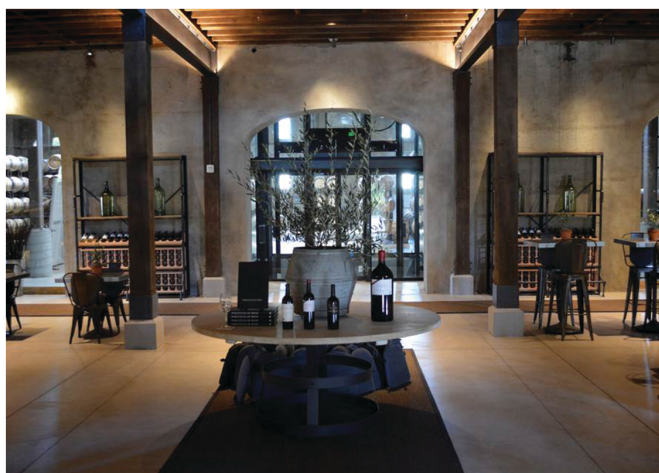
## Playing Mozart to the Vines

Santa Croce and Chandon and Ketchup, Oh My!

By *Baroness Sheri de Borchgrave*



**Baroness Sheri de Borchgrave** writes the Wine & Spirits column for our four C&G publications and is the author of the steamy memoir, *A Dangerous Liaison* (Dutton), about her romance and marriage to a Belgian baron and what goes on behind castle walls.



When I have lunch at **The Modern** in a private room with only four other journalists and we indulge in delicacies like foie gras, black truffles and old rare vintages of wine, I know I chose the right field of work. Peter Mondavi Jr. conducted a tasting of three old vintages from his **Charles Krug** winery, which happens to be Napa's oldest wine property dating back to 1861. The mini-vertical comprised: Charles Krug Vintage Selection 1966 (\$770), Vintage Selection 1979 (\$408) and Vintage Selection 1984 (\$320).

*Charles Krug*  
PETER MONDAVI FAMILY

Peter Mondavi (not to be confused with the Robert Mondavi branch) spoke of his father, who is going to turn 100 years old on November 8th, and how the winery has just restored their redwood and stone wine cellar (pictured above) from 1872. The restoration, done by the renowned architect, Howard Backen, will feature a 2,300 bottle vintage library with wines from 1944 till present.

Mondavi took us through the tasting of the three rare vintages in a systematic way. First, the sommelier, Courtney Olson, opened and decanted the delicate old wines about 45 minutes before the group arrived. Olson presented each cork on a silver platter for Mondavi's inspection. With the 1966 (which we tasted first since it was the most fragile) he held up the 2 ¼ inch cork and proclaimed it in good shape for 48 years. Next we inspected the wine's color. "Brick red, no brown, subtle hints of orange on the edges," Mondavi stated. Then the nose: "savory, cigar box, heavy olive notes, touch of anise, bright acidity."

We moved on to the vintage '79, which was a deeper darker red brick and had more freshness of the nose and subtle hints of savory with less olive, more tobacco notes. And finally the vintage '84, a mere 30 years ago, had a pretty nose and was fruity with cherry and red plum notes, a touch of cigar box and a nice acidity.

The Modern's new chef, Abram Bissell, announced each course he had created to pair with these old vintages: roasted whole carrots and foie gras, smoked beef tenderloin with porcini mushrooms and a baked brie covered with shaved French black truffles. During lunch the newly released 2011 Charles Krug Family Reserve Generations and the Howell Mountain Cabernet were also served. I know it is sacrilege to say but I greatly prefer young vintages to rare old vintages. Tasting old vintages is definitely about intellectual pleasure and curiosity at how wines develop over time. Whether rare vintage Napa Cabernet, Bordeaux, or Super Tuscan, I find the taste of these old-timers to be medicinal and herbal. The Charles Krug Howell Mountain Cabernet, the first release from the winery's 60-acre forested property acquired nine years ago, was young, expressive, savory—i.e. wine at its prime.