



## Touring and Tasting at Wente Vineyards in Livermore, California

Renee Humphrey • August 19, 2018

Did you know you can take the BART train (with a short car service ride from Pleasanton) from the Bay Area to go wine tasting in Livermore Valley? Well, you can! It's a very price-friendly option with no drinking and driving to worry about. It's pretty out there, too. Wente has 2000 acres of vineyards planted and there are a total of 4000 acres planted in the valley.

A friend of mine won a Wente wine tasting at an auction and was kind enough to gather a group of friends to accompany her. I knew very little about Wente before going there. I'm glad that's changed, and am happy now to share what I learned.

Wente is one of the oldest vineyard properties in California. In Livermore, before Prohibition, there were sixty-some wineries. After prohibition, there were two: Wente and Concannon.

Perhaps the greatest lapse in general knowledge about Wente wines is that they started with the same semillion and sauvignon blanc cuttings from Chateau Yquem, the same ones that were responsible for the first Grand Prize in France ever given to a California wine, Cresta Blanca from Livermore Valley. This prize was given in 1889.

Wente now owns the Cresta Blanca property and has preserved it. Suffice it to say that Napa has done a way better job of advertising their French competition win in 1976 — and Livermore has suffered in esteem because of it. The current generation of Wente are doing their best to right the wrong. The Wente Chardonnay clone is widely in use, so that helps.







# DRINKHACKER

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO GOOD DRINKING

## Touring and Tasting at Wente Vineyards in Livermore, California

Renee Humphrey • August 19, 2018

Wente has two properties in Livermore with tasting rooms and food options, about a ten minute drive from each other, so be sure to check the address of where you're going before you just blindly call out Wente to the driver of whichever ridesharing app you use. BART has plans in the works to get a train all the way to Livermore, but that hasn't come to fruition just yet, and anyone reading this will probably be dead and gone by the time it does, anyway.

The wines have a wide price range. I now know that if I need to buy wine at a grocery store, Wente is a good bet, particularly if you're looking in the \$12 to \$16 range. At the tasting, I found I preferred the more expensive wines.



### Highlights of the Tasting:

2017 Wente Eric's Chardonnay – from their Small Lot line, estate grown fruit aged 4 months in stainless steel. Crisp, higher acid, green apple. A- / \$30

2016 Wente Winemakers Selection Cunoise – 80% Cunoise, 20% Grenache aged 12 months in neutral French oak, lithe strawberry, earth and pepper. A- / \$55

2016 Nth Degree Pinot Noir – estate fruit from the Arroyo Secco, Monterey vineyard, a nice medium-bodied Pinot, dark cherry, cranberry, aged 14 months in 40% new, 60% neutral French Oak. B+ / \$95

2015 Wente Winemakers Selection Azul Verde – also from their Small Lot line, 50% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Franc, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine lives up to its Blue Green moniker with lovely blueberry herbaceousness plus some purple figs and plums. B+ / \$50

2015 Wente Winemakers Selection Nobel Roots – another Small Lot, a toothsome red blend of 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Malbec, 8% Petite Verdot, 8% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Franc aged in 70% new, 30% neutral French oak for 18 months. A- / \$55