

WINE COUNTRY *This Week*



Bill and Gerry Brinton welcome visitors to their new tasting room and gallery located on the historic Plaza in Sonoma.

Tasting Room of the Week:

Charles Creek Vineyards

by Charles Neave

No longer do you have to wait for a mail order shipment of Charles Creek Vineyards award-winning wines to show up at your door before you can try it. With the grand opening of the new Charles Creek Tasting Room & Gallery right on the historic and charming Sonoma Town Plaza in Sonoma you can walk right in and try the wines for yourself, and have a great time doing it as well.

The excellent selection of wines aside, just being in the tasting room and gallery is a treat in and of itself. An ever-changing assortment of original art, from paintings and drawings to folk art and photography, hangs on the soft-hued walls. The cabinets are antique, as is the zinc-topped tasting bar. The tasting selections for the day are written on the ends of barrels that are behind the bar above the mirrored wall of wine and gold etched glasses. And very decent-sized glasses they are, always an important factor to consider when you are sampling fine wine. The wood on the cabinets and the base of the bar is pol-

ished but still well-worn, all of which fits into the overall ambience of this beautiful old storefront building.

Our front green planters sit below almost an entire wall of old windows, and what storefront there is is painted a pale yellow. Double doors, glass-fronted as well, beckon passers-by, as they have for many decades.

Inside you will have a chance to try the Charles Creek Las Patolitas, which won the gold medal for Best in Class at last year's prestigious (and always very competitive) **San Francisco Chronicle** Wine Competition. Made of 100-percent Chardonnay from the Sangiacomo and Bald Mountain Vineyards it is a delight to try. Then there is the Vista del Halcon, another Chardonnay, this one from a single vineyard property in the famous Russian River Valley northwest of the town of Sonoma.

The La Sorpresa and Las Abuelas Chardonnays round out the impressive list of white wines.

For reds your choice is a rich, well-rounded Merlot - the Miradero - and a Napa

Valley Cabernet Sauvignon called La Sonrisa del Tecolote that scored 92 points in the **Wine Enthusiast** for its abundance of cassis, black cherry, dark plum and red currant fruit flavors, and for an intriguing hint of chocolate. Even more amazing is the fact that all of the wines are very reasonably priced considering the high quality and their limited production. As if you really needed one more reason to take a drive to Sonoma and stop in at this newest addition bro the Charles Creek Vineyards name.

The tasting room at Charles Creek is open Wednesday thru Monday from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. (open 7 days a week beginning in May) They are located across the street from the Plaza in Sonoma at 483 First Street West.

For more information contact them at (707) 935-3848 (the tasting room) or (707) 996-662 (main office) or look them up on the internet at: www.charlescreek.com