

Modern Bride

Vintage Romance

An East Coast couple get a taste of the country life on a honeymoon spent wining, dining and unwinding in Napa and Sonoma valleys, CA

THE CELEBRATORY TOASTING LASTED long beyond the reception for Holly Watson, MB's photo editor, and her new husband, Edward Buerger. The pair clinked glasses many times on a weeklong tour of California's wine country following their October 2006 wedding. As wine enthusiasts—though hardly aficionados, says Holly—the couple wanted to cultivate their palates and learn more about the wine-making process, not to mention enjoy fine dining and relax in the region's ultraluxe accommodations.

They began their honeymoon in picturesque Napa Valley, amid rolling grapevine-striped hills framed by distant peaks. Though their spacious, rose petal-strewn cottage at The Carneros Inn made it tempting to stay in, the newlyweds ventured out for tastings at local wineries Joseph Phelps, Artesa and Opus One.

The sipping didn't stop there. The couple scored a table for two at chef Thomas Keller's famed French Laundry, where their 3.5-hour, nine-course tasting menu was expertly paired with fine blends. "New dishes kept coming," Holly says of the culinary odyssey, "but by the fourth dessert I had to call it quits!"

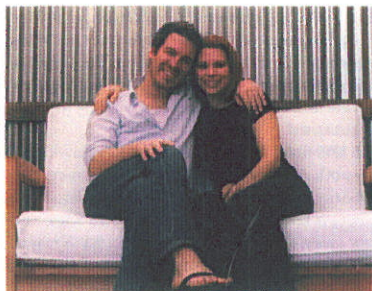
Halfway through the trip, the pair drove to Sonoma and checked into an Asian-inspired room at Gaige House, where the flavorful gourmet breakfasts led to many Zen moments. Though they had made reservations at most wineries, a bottle of locally produced pinot gris at chef Charlie Palmer's restaurant, Dry Creek Kitchen, inspired an unplanned visit to J Vineyards & Winery. After selecting more bottles to be shipped back home, the couple spent a final night in San Francisco, toasting their good taste in travel. —Elaine Stuart



Above: The pool at The Carneros Inn offers panoramic views of the resort's 27 acres of lush farmland. Below: A gas fireplace, flat-screen TV, deep soaking bathtub and minimalist decor make the couple's Gaige House suite a most romantic retreat.



Opposite: "We loved the art and modern architecture," says Holly of Artesa Winery, which is built into a hill. This page, above: J Vineyards & Winery produces crisp, dry white wine.



Learn From Holly and Edward

START AT THE SPA. Holly spent her first morning getting a massage and facial at The Carneros Inn (while Edward lounged in their suite). "It was the perfect way to begin—getting rid of any stress and airplane aches," she says.

PREPARE TO SHARE. Especially if you're visiting more than one vineyard a day, Holly recommends splitting each serving of wine between the two of you.

GO FOR THE GOLD. "Reserve tastings tend to cost around \$5 extra," Holly says; it's worth splurging for the chance to sample a winery's finest varietals.

TAKE TASTING NOTES. The couple particularly loved a bottle of red wine they had with dinner at French Laundry, so they jotted down the name. They purchased it at a local wine shop and are saving it for their first anniversary.