

BEST WINE TASTING ROOM

Dutton-Goldfield Winery



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By Alexandra Russell

Located in the big, green building at the intersection of Graustein Highway and Graton Road, the Dutton-Goldfield tasting room offers a variety of experiences for those who stop by. It's open daily from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and small groups (of six or less) are always welcome to drop in for a casual tasting. And with a little advance notice, you can really make your visit special.

"We offer several different seated tastings by appointment," says Manager Valerie Wathen. "Some of the more popular are the 'Beast and Pinot' [featuring local charcuterie], a wine and cheese pairing [local cheeses, of course] and an educational seated tasting about our vineyards and wines, with maps, soil sample and sensory jars. Plus, we're just introducing a new tasting experience, 'Sushi and Whites.'" The basic tasting fee is \$15 per person (waived with wine purchase); seated events vary in price (check the website).

In 1998, East Coast transplant and winemaker Dan Goldfield partnered with fifth-generation West Sonoma County farmer Steve Dutton to found the winery, which concentrates mainly on Pinot Noir and Chardonnay—and mainly on Dutton ranch fruit—though, laughs Wathen, explaining the Old Vine Zinfandel, cool climate Syrah and "bright whites" (Pinot Blanc, Gewürztraminer and Riesling) also in production, "Dan can't say 'No' to good fruit!"

The tasting room opened five years ago and was recently remodeled. The new space is open and inviting, with warm earth tones and natural touches. Local art on the walls is for sale and changes every two months. Guests are welcome to bring their own picnic (if they purchase some wine) to enjoy inside or on the

lovely, umbrella-shaded patio out front. Friendly dogs and kids are welcome.

Dutton-Goldfield participates in many Wine Road and community events and hosts several parties of its own, both for its wine club members and the general public. The space also can be rented out for private events.

Because of its proximity to several other prominent wineries (including Red Car, Merry Edwards, Iron Horse and others), Wathen says, many visitors from out of the area drop by after being referred by a neighbor. It's a favor the Dutton-Goldfield staff is happy to reciprocate. "We encourage guests to stay in the area," she says. "There are so many great wineries and destinations around here. You can have a whole weekend in five miles."

Wathen credits this award to the tasting room staff, saying, "We have fantastic wines, with balance and finesse, and the pedigree of a great founding partnership. The remodeled room has a warm, unpretentious and welcoming feel.

"Our tasting room manager, David Hewitt, has been with us since this room opened five years ago, and our new hospitality manager, Nicole Kosta, is a sommelier, so she's stepped up our service even more. But our staff is really the best. They're all fun, friendly people who love wine and educating people about it."

To *NorthBay biz* readers, Wathen offers heartfelt thanks: "We're thrilled that you voted for us, have made us welcome and helped make our tasting room a success. If you haven't come to see us before, please stop by. We'd love to share our wines and hospitality with you." ♦



(L to R): David Hewitt, tasting room manager; Dan Goldfield, partner/winemaker; Steve Dutton, partner/grape grower; Nicole Kosta, direct sales and hospitality manager [Duncan Garrett Photography]

www.duttongoldfield.com