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## NOT YOUR AVERAGE NAPA

PATSY BARICH, DECEMBER 2010



Browse organic produce at Oxford Public Market

## Sommelier Jason Alexander's inside look at Wine Country.

As the morning sun's first rays touch the fruit-laden vineyards of world-renowned Napa Valley, wine sommelier and [Meteor Vineyard](#) Manager Jason Alexander steers his car into the parking lot of the Oxbow Public Market to grab his daily cup of joe from Ritual Coffee Roasters. Napa's Oxbow Market, patterned after San Francisco's famed Ferry Building food hall, is home to half a dozen restaurants and dozens of specialty food and wine retailers including an outpost of the Hog Island Oyster Company, the just-opened C'a Momi Winery and Enoteca and the heralded Fatted Calf charcuterie.

*Meteor Vineyard is located in Coombsville, a lesser-known grape growing region at the southeast end of Napa. It is on the cusp of discovery.*

Arriving at the Meteor Vineyard office a short drive away, Jason checks for any early calls and then takes a morning walk through vineyard to taste where the grapes are in their ripening process on the different blocks. He then meets with Dawnine Dyer, Meteor Vineyard's winemaker, to get an update on Harvest. Dyer is revered in the winemaking community based on her expert vineyard knowledge and veteran experience with many Napa Valley Wineries, including Robert Mondavi, Domaine Chandon and the eponymous Dyer Vineyard.

Meteor Vineyard is located in Coombsville, a lesser-known grape growing region at the southeast end of [Napa](#). It is on the cusp of discovery. Sitting on a plateau under the imposing Mount George, Coombsville has a microclimate that features a unique combination of cool air, consistent temperatures, varied elevations and well-drained, mineral-rich soils.



*The glowing sunsets of Meteor Vineyard*

Around 10:30 a.m. Jason joins a group of fellow sommeliers at Redd in Yountville to participate in a weekly blind tasting. The group usually focuses on a specific grape or style/year of wine for these events. Today they are exploring the subtle vineyard differences of Puligny-Montrachet.

*His extensive wine background includes assembling and managing multi-million dollar rare and sought-after wine collections.*

Initially pursuing poetry but soon drawn to the world of fine wines, Jason studied alongside some of the most noted sommeliers in the US and went on to earn a reputation as an internationally recognized, award-winning sommelier with a legacy of wine director positions at prestigious [San Francisco](#) Bay Area restaurants, including Gary Danko in San Francisco and Cyrus in [Healdsburg](#),

California.

## Azzurro Pizzeria E Enoteca

Jason and a sommelier friend escape for an early lunch at [Azzurro Pizzeria E Enoteca](#), a thin crust Southern Italian pizza place beloved by locals and tourists, if they discover it. It's casual, inexpensive and sophisticated all at once, with great pizzas, bruschette, antipasti and manciata ("handful" of just-baked dough with a salad on top, to fold and eat sandwich-style); owner Michael Gyetvan was well-trained by Northern California chefs Bradley Ogden of One Market/The Lark Creek Inn, and Michael Chiarello of Tra Vigne and the NapaStyle empire.



*Take a bite out of this pizza pie. Photo credit: Laura Norcia Vitale*

Jason heads back to Meteor Vineyard for an early afternoon meeting with vineyard owners Barry Schuler (technology and education pioneer and former CEO of America Online), Tracy Schuler and the Meteor Vineyard team to review the developing schedule for the release of a new vintage and a new Cabernet Sauvignon called Perseid. "With multiple years of work in the vineyard, we finally feel like we understand its nuances and unique nature. The 2007 Perseid is a perfect example of that, where all of the elements of the vineyard and vintage came together to produce a wine singularly Meteor Vineyard," Jason says.



