



BOEGER

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TASTING ROOM OPEN DAILY 10-5





Casque on the Placer Wine Trail concentrates on Rhone varietals.
BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

Follow Placer trail to Loomis

Casque finds niche at Flower Farm

An early-afternoon drive on the Placer Wine Trail took us along twisty two-lane blacktops, past thick woods and fallow fields, grazing sheep and faded-wood barns.

The trail meanders through rural Auburn, Granite Bay, Lincoln, Loomis, Newcastle, Rocklin and Meadow Vista, delivering the curious to 20-some winery tasting rooms. The newest, Dora Dain Wines, is anticipated to open soon. Download a map at www.placerwine.com.

We pulled into the 10-acre Flower Farm in Loomis, a shady oasis with a grapevine-covered trellis shading a bocce ball court that's presided over by a near-life-size plastic cow. It's a citrus farm and plant nursery, with a popular café and a tin-sided gift shop that's really a mini-barn. (Anyone for a bottle of "goat milk lotion"?)

Flower Farm is also home to the Casque Wines tasting room, where part of one wall is crowded with awards from wide-ranging competitions.

Owner-winemaker Kevin Stevenson and assistant winemaker Tim Weyrich have mastered the art of blending varietals into a portfolio of reds and whites.

"Over the last four years, we've expanded from 2,200 cases a year to about 5,000," Stevenson said. "We've grown organically by word of mouth. We've been getting some really nice scores in (wine industry) magazines, so the wines tend to sell themselves. Our rose is gone two weeks after we release it in the spring."

Casque bottles 14 to 16 Rhone-style wines a year, many of them blends made from three to five varietals. For instance, its complex Calotte Blanc mingles marsanne, viognier, grenache blanc, roussane and picpoul blanc (90 points from the Wine Enthusiast). The red version of Calotte is a GSM, a blend of the classic Rhone varietals grenache, syrah and mourvedre (91 points).

All of Casque's fruit is sourced from 10 to 12 different vineyards in the Sierra Foothills AVA (American Viticultural Area).

A flight of eight to 10 tastes is \$5, waived with the purchase of a bottle.

The Casque tasting room is at 9280 Horseshoe Bar Road, Loomis, 916-652-2250, www.casquewines.com

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saddle up for the Auburn Wine, Ale and Food Festival, Oct. 12-13. Details and tickets at www.auburnwinefestival.com.

Practice for it at the Big Crush Harvest Festival, Oct. 5-6, by dropping by any of the 42 wineries in Amador Wine Country. Download a map and get details at

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