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LEGACY



A historic vineyard draws upon traditions from its past and present for a celebration unlike any other in Wine Country.

BY SARAH LYNCH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC ROYER

Harvest Fiesta



"I didn't know what chickens were before I got here," says the winemaker, Steve Pat Stotesbury, as he returns to the vineyard work for a second harvest of grapes' famous harvest.



MARIN
GREEN FOR
THE HOLIDAY
NAPA
HARVEST PARTY
WITH A HISTOR

Visiting Ladera Vineyards on Howell Mountain, you would never guess you were in Napa. It might be the towering redwood trees or the notable altitude. Or maybe it's the venerable 114-year-old stone winery. On this particular autumn Saturday—when the winery is hosting its annual harvest party, a 20-year tradition—it could very well be the 10-piece mariachi band playing under a eucalyptus tree. It's a world away from the orchestrated elegance of Wine Country. There are three simple explanations for why a trip to this winery feels like a journey back in time—the history of the land, the background of its current owners and the decades-long stewardship of the vineyard manager.

Ladera's story goes back to 1877, when it was established as Nouveau Medoc by two French partners, Jean Brun and Jean Chaix. By 1886, Brun and Chaix had built a three-story winery with 30-inch-thick stone walls, designed for gravity-flow winemaking (a traditional process designed to minimize bruising of the grapes and unnecessary agitation of the wine). These 185 acres on Howell Mountain were used for various crops until 1982, when a couple from Bordeaux planted it with Chardonnay grapes. In 2000, the property was purchased by the Stotesberys, who renamed it *Ladera* (Spanish for hillside).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
The setting for the Mexican-themed harvest party includes picnic tables set with classic checkerboard tablecloths and flowers from Anne's gardens, traditional mariachi music and vines heavy with plump fruit.