

**GOLF, WINE AND THE GOOD LIFE**  
By Cori Brett, *Special to the AWGA*



Checking in for a round of golf at The Course at Wentz Vineyards, I noticed a prominent display of wine bottles with “Annika” strikingly embossed in gold on sleek black labels. This was Annika Sorenstam’s inaugural vintage. She partnered with Karl Wentz at Wentz Vineyards to produce her first wine, an elegant Syrah, released in May 2009. (AWGA Board review follows!)

Wentz Vineyards is California’s oldest continuously operated family-owned winery, founded in 1883. Today the fourth and fifth generations of the Wentz Family manage winemaking operations and Estate vineyards covering 3,000 acres.

The same scenic land that produces premier grapes is also home to one of Northern California’s best destination golf courses. Player-vintner Greg Norman designed The Course at Wentz Vineyards in 1998. Fairways weave through the magnificent vineyards, sometimes close enough for me to retrieve golf balls that went astray.

To reach the sky-high 10<sup>th</sup> tee, we carefully navigated the “Lombard Street” of cart paths. A steep ascent with tight hairpin turns eventually reveals a panoramic vista of gently

rolling hills. San Francisco and the real Lombard Street lie only some 40 miles due west, yet worlds away from the rural Livermore Valley.



It was a typically windy afternoon, so keeping it straight on the narrow fairways became even more challenging. Lots of elevation changes yielded great views, and I enjoyed a fun round from the white tees at 5,600 yards.

As it turned out, golf was only the beginning. Wente is like a sprawling ranch estate with golf, wine tasting, restaurant, and concert venue all within convenient walking distance. The Restaurant at Wente Vineyards has won honors and awards since it opened in 1986. Bay Area folks know it's worth a special trip.

Our concert tickets included dinner at The Restaurant before the performance. We dined on the lovely patio, shaded by old trees, overlooking the organic herb and vegetable gardens and the vast lawn being set up for the concert. The menu focuses on organic, local ingredients, imaginatively prepared, with of course perfect wine pairings to match.



Summer concerts that began in 1986 as casual picnics on the lawn have evolved to sold-out events that draw from all over the Bay Area. The 2009 schedule features performers like Diana Krall, Sheryl Crow and James Taylor. The stage was set and musicians warming up as we settled into front-row seats and watched Grammy award-winning country singer Gretchen Wilson perform her number one hit, "Redneck Woman." Adoring fans applauded and stars twinkled above on this soft summer night.

SEE AWGA BOARD'S WINE REVIEW BELOW.

#### ANNIKA SYRAH WINS AWGA BOARD APPROVAL

AWGA Board members were among the first to sample the new Annika Syrah. Some of the comments were, “very good, really rich, for a rich dinner, this is a very civilized wine, lots of body, actually dense, resembles a zinfandel...” Kathy Ehrlich summed it all up when she said, “It makes me want to have a lamb chop.”

Annika Syrah is available at [www.annikavineyards.com](http://www.annikavineyards.com) or [www.wentevineyards.com](http://www.wentevineyards.com);  
\$75 for 750 ml; \$175 for 1.5 liters

*“Escape with Cori” on assignment to exotic and fun golf destinations. First-hand impressions from an experienced golf travel writer and AWGA member, available only on the AWGA website. [www.coribrett.com](http://www.coribrett.com)*