



## San Francisco Chronicle

## Tasting Room: A twofer for tasters in Santa Rosa

Carol Ness, Chronicle Staff Writer

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The chance to sample from two tastings rooms at once - both operated by Russian River Valley grapegrowers-turned-vintners - is the draw at the warehouse-style building that's sprung up on the flatlands just west of Santa Rosa.

It's a collaboration of two wineries, Dutton-Goldfield Winery and Balletto Vineyards, that sits on Balletto's home ranch just northeast of Sebastopol.

Outside, a tall wooden framework outlines a patio area that's recently been carved out of the large, pothole-strewn dirt and gravel parking lot. Newish plantings, heat lamps and seating promise a comfy outdoor space come summer.

Inside, a long Corian tasting bar in pale brick tones and a terracotta tile floor warm up what's otherwise a modern low-ceilinged room.

Belly up to taste wines made from grapes that made many other wineries famous before the Dutton and Balletto families started making wines from their grapes within the last decade. Dutton-Goldfield's first vintage was in 1998, Dutton Estate's in 1995 (starting out as Sebastopol Winery) and Balletto's in 2001. The tasting room opened in 2006



## The Tasting Room

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The Dutton name is well known in the Russian River Valley. Dutton Ranch, first under Warren Dutton, has sold its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes to a prime list of vintners, including Kistler, DuMol, Hartford and Lewis.

Now, grapes from the ranch also go to separate wineries run by Warren Dutton's sons, Steve and Joe; Dutton Estate, Joe's winery in partnership with winemaker Mat Gustafson; and Dutton-Goldfield, Steve's partnership with winemaker Dan Goldfield.

The Balletto farming family likewise sells to many other vintners, and started making its own wines in 2001. Dutton-Goldfield makes its wines at the Balletto winery, which shares the warehouse that houses the tasting room.

Got all that?

**The vibe:** Set at the entrance to the Russian River Valley wineries, this tasting room feels relatively undiscovered, at least on a recent cloudy and cool weekday. The room has the industrial feel of a space walled off from a warehouse, because it is, but it's also friendly and unpretentious.

**The teams:** For Dutton-Goldfield, Steve Dutton manages the vineyards with his brother, Joe, while Dan Goldfield brings a raft of winemaking experience from his years at Robert Mondavi and Schramsberg, then as winemaker at La Crema Winery and founder of Hartford Court winery.

John Balletto started out farming vegetables on the family's 200-acre-plus ranch in 1977, but gradually replaced the zucchini with grapes and, with his wife, Terri, started crushing their own wines in 2001. They still sell most of their grapes to other wineries.

**The wines:** Dutton-Goldfield is known for its Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs made from the Dutton Ranch vineyards. It also makes Pinot Blanc, Syrah and Zinfandel. Four tastes cost \$5, from a selection of nine offered on a recent visit. Stars of the day were the 2005 Dutton Ranch Chardonnay (Green Valley-Russian River Valley), the 2005 McDougall Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast) and the 2005 Morelli Lane Vineyard Zinfandel (Green Valley-Russian River Valley).

Balletto makes estate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, as well as Russian River Valley Zinfandel, Syrah, Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer from grapes the family grows in partnership. Here,

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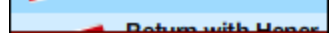
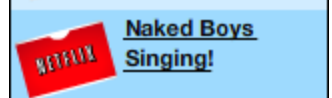
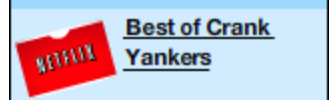
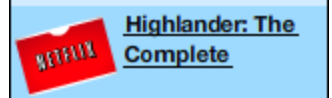
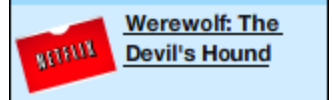
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too, \$5 buys four tastes from four wines offered, including the 2005 Balletto Estate Russian River Valley Chardonnay and the 2006 Balletto Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

**The experience:** On a quiet weekday, the staff was friendly, unpretentious and knowledgeable about wines from both wineries. They didn't push sales, and were attentive while at the same time allowing comfortable silences. The experience was very pleasant, with few frills.

**The extras:** The outdoor seating area looks like it could be pleasant for picnics once the weather improves and the plants grow in.

**Nearby:** Dutton Estate (8757 Green Valley Road, Sebastopol; 707-829-9463); Lynmar Winery (3909 Frei Road, Sebastopol; 707-829-3374).

## Dutton-Goldfield Winery and Balletto Vineyards

5700 Occidental Road, Santa Rosa

(707) 568-2455, Ext. 18, [www.duttongoldfield.com](http://www.duttongoldfield.com) and [www.ballettovineyards.com](http://www.ballettovineyards.com)

Open 10 a.m.-4 p.m daily.

Rating: Rating: TWO STARS 1/2

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*This article appeared on page F - 3 of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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