



AVANT TAPAS AND WINE

Monday, Thursday, Sunday 11am-8pm; Friday and Saturday 11am-10pm

35 Industrial Way, Buellton

(805) 686-4742 | www.avantwines.com | Email: info@avantwines.com

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STORY FEATURE

AVANT

Tapas and Wine

BY CROLYN TURNER

“A Neoclassic Modern Industrial Experience in Wine Tasting.” With a description like that, it’s easy to understand why Avant Tapas and Wine in Buellton has piqued the curiosity of even the newest of oenophiles (aka “wine lovers”). Certainly, I’ve never heard of any other place in the Santa Ynez Valley described in that way; and that’s simply because there’s nowhere else quite like Avant Tapas and Wine.

In the summer of 2008 there was a lot of buzz about Terravant Wine Company, the new custom crush winemaking facility that opened in the industrial area of Buellton off highway 246. This new business would offer winemakers a state of the art facility to create and store their wines. Then in the fall of 2009, Terravant created even more excitement when they announced the opening of Avant Tapas and Wine, a beautiful restaurant with a large window that overlooks part of the winery. Visitors will often have the chance to see winemakers in action while tasting the very wines that were created only a few feet away.

Visitors also have the opportunity to take a tour of the Terravant facility, which highlights aspects of the entire winemaking process from grape to bottle. Tours are offered throughout the day, although larger groups are required to call ahead to make an appointment.

“Avant offers a unique wine tasting and dining experience by allowing visitors to experience wines made on the Central Coast at the Terravant Wine Company, alongside of foods grown on the Central Coast,” said Joe Padilla, manager of Avant Tapas and Wine.

More than 40 winemakers create their wines at Terravant Wine Company, many of which are available for tasting at the Wine Wall in Avant. Believe me, this feature is as amazing as it sounds: an entire wall of the restaurant dedicated to a unique dispensing system that allows guests to select whether they want to try a sip, a whole glass, or something in between. Many of the wineries featured on the Wine Wall do not have their own tasting rooms, making Avant the only tasting room opportunity for these

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wines. Keeping with their "Local Centric" philosophy, about 10% of the Wine Wall promotes other unique and interesting wines made on the Central Coast.

Since Avant offers such a unique selection of wines, it was imperative that the restaurant's menu be equally as impressive and diverse. Enter the culinary queen, chef and local Santa Barbaran Brooke Stockwell. Stockwell's menu changes with the season and is made with incredibly fresh ingredients gathered from local farmers' markets and other producers within a 200-mile radius of the restaurant. I highly recommend starting with an order of Yuppy Crack (you won't regret it!) before diving into a mouth-watering wood-fired pizza, crisp salad or artistically prepared tapas.

So if you had to choose one word to describe this haven of wine and food, what would it be? Why Avantastic, of course.

As the website notes: "Bring a few dozen winemakers and their wines together in one place and most call it a wine festival. We just call it another day at Avant. Our expansive collection of wines...yields an Avantastic degree of wine tasting you'll find nowhere else."

Padilla adds to that: "Avant is the one place where a visitor can see wine being made, meet one of over 40 different winemakers, and enjoy their wine paired with world class cuisine produced from local ingredients all under one roof."

Whether you're a local or merely passing through on vacation, joining Avant's Collectors Wine Club allows you to take a bit of Avant home with you, including wines created specifically for Avant by ten Central Coast winemakers. Or grab a bottle of one of the hundreds of local wines sold at the Avant Wine Shop.

It's certainly never a dull moment at Avant, with winemakers stopping in to pour their wines, sharing their stories and rubbing elbows with the crowd. There are also quite a few scheduled tasting events with winemakers, including a Preview Tasting on Friday, April 20th, the evening before the Vintner's Festival, one of the largest wine tastings on the Central Coast. Also, every Friday and Saturday visitors will be treated to live music from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Make sure to check www.avantwines.com and click on the Events tab for information about upcoming tastings and other events.

And don't be surprised if after only one visit, you find that "Avantastic" becomes part of your vocabulary.

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