

# Two Winemaker Events Celebrate Spring in Paso Robles

**Lee Daley , SF Upscale Travel Examiner**

**Wine lovers** can take part in the world's largest celebration of Rhone Variety wines on one weekend in April and then continue romancing the vines by meeting the personalities behind the wines at the 29th **Annual Paso Robles Annual Wine Festival** the following month.

**Both events take place in downtown Paso Robles** along California's Central Coast, halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Because of its long growing season with warm days and cool evenings, more than 40 different wine grape varieties flourish here.

**Here's a roundup of dates and highlights** along with tips on lodging and dining.. The San Luis Obispo County Visitors and Conference Bureau is an excellent resource for planning your trip to the entire region.

**The annual Hospice du Rhone celebration** draws more than 1,200 Rhone lovers annually to Paso Robles, where the enchantment, history and tastes of an international collection of Rhone variety wines commingle with tastings of Rhone inspired cuisine. While the number of wine professionals in attendance abounds, enthusiasts who possess a passion for the 22 Rhone varieties flock to the event as well.

**Now in its 19th year**, the weekend kicks off on Thursday evening (April 28) with a spirited bowling tournament at the Paso Bowl. Lunches, tastings, seminars, a live auction and an international street faire round out the festivities. A Saturday evening farewell BBQ closes out the high-energy event.

**You can purchase a weekend pass** or an individual ticket to one of the four seminars at [www2.cleverconcepts.net/hospicedurhone.org/tickets/index/php](http://www2.cleverconcepts.net/hospicedurhone.org/tickets/index/php). Dates: Thursday, April 28 through Saturday April 30. Most events are held at the Paso Robles Event Center. Passes are limited so call ahead for each event.

**Continue the Romance.** Meet the personalities behind the wines at the 29th Annual Paso Robles Wine Festival. This celebration brings more than 90 wineries to the Paso Robles' downtown City Park. Joining in the fun are local artisans and chefs so there will be lots of culinary and cultural delights to enhance the weekend festivities. And to top it off, Paso Robles well known "farm to table" food purveyors, growers and restaurateurs will all be vying for your attention. Friday evening's RESERVE event offers the opportunity to bid on the wines featured in the category of futures. Winning bidders will receive a case of their selected wine once it has matured and is ready for release.

**Saturday's Grand Tasting** combines more than 400 wines with the creations of local culinary artists, chef demonstrations and music from the Guy Budd Band, all splendidly spread out beneath the oaks of the Paso Robles Downtown City Park. Then, Saturday evening, join your favorite winemakers as they pull up rare wines from deep within their cellars to accompany a locally-inspired meal and the remarkable auction lots found at the Wine Country Auction & Dinner. Seeing more of Paso Robles:

**While in town**, opt for a romantic repast at an outdoor patio seat at Thomas Hill Organics Market Bistro, where owners Joe and Debbie Thomas source ingredients for their diverse menu from their 10-acre farm... Chef Julie Simon's menu changes often but quality and fine service are always high.

**During the same weekend**, more than 140 wineries will be hosting events at vineyards throughout the region... Open house festivities, live music, winemaker dinners and more await those looking for the inspiration behind each wine

**Linger on past the weekend if you can.** On Monday evening, Niner Wine Estates, one of Paso Robles' most illustrious wineries will be holding a seminar as part of its 2011 Wine Education Series, this one highlighting the wines of Portugal. The winery's stone-barn designed Hospitality Center adjoins Heart Hill, so named for the natural oak growth on its hillside that forms a perfect heart shape. Call 805.239.2233 or email [info@ninerwine.com](mailto:info@ninerwine.com) for further information.

**Where to Stay:** At the end of the day, a lovely place to hang your hat is the historic but newly renovated Paso Robles Inn in the heart of downtown Paso Robles. Splurge by springing for one of the inn's spa rooms where you can soak in your own mineral spa tub filled with water from the inn's own hot springs. The inn has recently revitalized its traditional flair by adding fireplaces and flat-screen TVs to some rooms.

**Enjoy dinner in the Inn's Steakhouse Restaurant** where the open stone fireplace lends romance to the comfortable booths and white linen topped tables. Heated patio seating overlooks the inn's manicured gardens. [www.pasoroblesinn.com](http://www.pasoroblesinn.com) call 805.238.2660 or toll-free 800.676.1713. The Paso Robles Inn is located at 1103 Spring Street in the heart of Paso Robles.

**Details:**

San Luis Obispo Convention and Visitors Bureau: [www.sanluisobispocounty.com](http://www.sanluisobispocounty.com)

**Hospice du Rhone website:** [www.hospicedurhone.org/the-event/schedule.php](http://www.hospicedurhone.org/the-event/schedule.php) Dates: April 28-30, 2011

**Paso Robles Wine Festival:** [www.pasowine.com/events/winefestival.php](http://www.pasowine.com/events/winefestival.php) **Dates:** May 20-22, 2011...

**Niner Wine Estates:** Call 805-239 2233 or email [info@ninerwine.com](mailto:info@ninerwine.com) for the Portugal wine seminar.

**Thomas Hill Organics Market Bistro:** 1305 Park Street, Paso Robles, [www.thomashillorganics.com](http://www.thomashillorganics.com). Tel: (805) 226-5888

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