

Sommeliers Sample **Spring Mountain Harvest**



Vanessa Trevino-Boyd, wine director, Megu, New York City, and Sean Razez, wine director, the Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch, Colorado, harvest grapes in Spring Mountain.

For 13 sommeliers and wine buyers from across the country, the First Annual Spring Mountain District Association's "Touch the Terroir" event, held October 16 to 18 in the prestigious Napa Valley appellation, proved to be an opportunity to experience harvest and crush through the winemakers' eyes. The idea was to allow participants to work side by side with winemakers and grape growers during their daily harvesting and winemaking agendas.

Each morning the visitors were divided into small groups and taken to a winery to work with a winemaker. Each participant was housed on a host property; for some the morning commute was a short walk from the vineyard house to the cuverie, while for others it was a quick trip down Spring Mountain Road to their morning host winery. Time was spent either walking the vineyards and tasting grapes for physiological ripeness (the time when grape seeds begin to turn brown and skin tannins begin to soften and sweeten) or assisting with punch-downs, pump-overs, lees stirring, and finishing. Of course, a bit of tank or barrel tasting was thrown in for good measure.

After lunch in the vineyard or the barrel chai, the small groups were escorted to another host winery to witness the finishing of the crush of all the morning's harvests and the monitoring of newly fermenting tanks of grape juice to determine proper fermentation temperatures and yeast strength.

The easy evening conversation usually turned to family vineyard owners and second-generation winemakers who related stories of the "early days" on Spring Mountain. So often it is the stories and insights into a winery, a vineyard, or its family that sommeliers relate to their guests when selling a wine, and that is exactly what "Touch the Terroir" was able to impart.

➤ Sean Razez, wine director, the Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch, Colorado

A review of current Spring Mountain wines was published in the November 2006 issue of *Santé*.