



Left to Right is Merideth Canham-Nelson, Frank Melicia, Chris Nelson, Bill Parsons

## CRAFT BEER IN CARMEL VALLEY?

By Merideth Canham-Nelson

Here in Carmel Valley, we live among beautiful vineyards with wineries that produce great wines. The restaurants in our Village take care to create world-class wine lists to complement their tasty menus. But have you ever wondered, "Where is the craft beer?"

The fact is the tastes and styles of beer are as varied and complex as wine. And even in a wine area like Carmel Valley, beer is finding its place. Maybe the real question is not where is the beer, but rather "How does craft beer fit into our Valley?"

This past summer, Dean Hatfield launched Carmel Valley Brewing, which sits high above the vineyards of Boëté and Parsonage Village Vineyard. Carmel Valley Brewing's Pale Ale is a refreshing brew with a crisp floral nose and subtle hoppiness. Dean has worked hard and now you can find his beer in an increasing number of places in the Valley and throughout the Peninsula.

But it's not only beer aficionados getting into the act. Even fine winemakers can appreciate the complexity of craft beer. My husband Chris and I have homebrewed with Bill Parsons and Frank Melicia of Parsonage Village Vineyard. Opening a freshly brewed beer while surrounded by fine wine feels a bit rebellious, yet refined at the same time.

Speaking of refined, Daniel Barduzzi from Daniel's Garden Bistro is also curious about craft beer. On November 15, Daniel offered a wine and beer tasting dinner, where he asked, "Does gourmet food need to be accompanied by wine? Is beer okay?" My husband Chris selected three beers for the five-course meal and Brian Zelear from Zelear Cellars served a selection of his fine wines. All had fun, as we sat at one large table, heard the experts describe their respective beverages, and debated the merits of each with the dishes. Daniel said he came up with the idea because he thought it would be fun. And what could be more fun than a table of wine connoisseurs and beer geeks co-mingling?

Back to the question, "How does craft beer fit into Carmel Valley?" Well, whether it is a brewery surrounded by vineyards, local winemakers brewing beer, or a restaurateur promoting a battle of the beverages, craft beer is becoming more comfortable among the grape vines and wine glasses of Carmel Valley. I hope it will find a place with each of you, as well.

Merideth Canham-Nelson and her husband Chris Nelson have the beer travel website [thebeergeek.com](http://thebeergeek.com).



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