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Fashion

Book Notes

## LIFE LUXURY LEISURE



Previous Picture Next Picture

### Days of Wine and Roses

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by: Barbara Steinberg

As symbols of love, hope and passion, roses are said to have miraculous healing powers. The fragrance alone is legendary for soothing both heart and soul, and little is more satisfying than the culinary delight of roses. According to Greek mythology, the rose was created by the goddess of flowers, Chloris, with the help of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and Dionysus, the god of wine. Crowned the "Queen of Flowers," the rose has found a heavenly kingdom in the dells and hillsides of Sonoma County.

As diverse as the flower itself, a visit to this pastoral landscape is filled with rose-inspired escapades of varying colors, fragrances and form.

In any gardener's realm, the stunning and grand Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa is a long-stemmed beauty. Like delicate rose petals, the pale pink walls wrap themselves around manicured gardens and steamy hot springs pools. The comforting embrace of a romantic suite includes a two-person Jacuzzi tub and luxurious four-poster king-sized bed. After taking in the décor, head for the wonders of the spa, and partake of the "bathing ritual" at the famous Boyes Hot Springs (the source waters for Sonoma Mission Inn). Your idyllic respite has just begun. The spa's Couples' Wine & Roses Massage will relieve stress and worry. This opulent delight includes a rose-scented soak in a copperclad claw-foot tub, candlelight, delicious chocolates, rose petals and champagne. The 20-minute fragrant bubble bath is the prelude to side-by-side massages using products infused with rose and grape seed oil.

It's worth requesting a nighttime turndown upon retiring – rose petals are strewn across the bed and along the edge of the Jacuzzi, with the added bonus of a bottle of Champagne and one pure white rose.

Santa Rosa residents appropriately honored their patron, Saint Rose, when naming this community. Any visit to Santa Rosa is magical, but it's particularly beautiful during the Luther Burbank Rose Parade & Festival in May, when locals honor one of the earliest flowers known to man. The annual event, celebrated for more than 110 years, paid homage to the regal rose long before the distinguished horticultural mastermind settled in the region. Though predominantly known for his work with fruits and vegetables, Luther Burbank's early work also

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included hybridizing a number of roses that also played a part in his future research. Spectacular in spring, Burbank's handiwork is beautifully displayed at the Luther Burbank Home & Gardens. Docent-led tours from April to October include his greenhouse and Greek Revival home.

In gardening vernacular, Hotel La Rose in downtown Santa Rosa is truly Old World. Built in 1907, its timeless granite architecture reflects its warm and gracious interior. Historic rooms are named for the illustrious founders of Santa Rosa's Railroad Square, where the hotel is located. The recently added Carriage House, which surrounds a rose-draped courtyard, provides modern-day amenities with old fashioned appeal. "Every room is different. There's so much charm," says Laura Knipping, general manager. "And the outstanding service keeps everyone coming back."

From Hotel La Rose, it's a pleasant stroll to the nearby Brasserie Restaurant at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel. In honor of the Rose Parade, the restaurant's executive chef, Richard Whipple, serves rose-inspired fare with a focus on "farm to table." The delicate flavor of candied rose petals and rose hip syrup adds a fanciful essence to local organic greens. Tender duck breast from Liberty Farms in Petaluma, served on spinach risotto adorned with rose petals and drizzled with homemade rose jam, is almost sinful. A shimmering rose-infused crème brûlée – the pièce de résistance – is the perfect end to this presentation. As a final complement to this flourish of flowers, the delightful Romance Rose Package– candle-lit rose-petal path, champagne, chocolates and a dozen red roses – sets the mood for love and romance.

Hybrid tea roses are popular for their color and form. With this in mind, the Flamingo Conference Resort and Spa is the best of the breed. The flamboyant neon pink flamingo and multi-hued lobby might contradict the otherwise stylish architecture of this midcentury modern hotel, but beyond the showy entry, it's pure '50s kitsch and Rat Pack chic. Glass breezeways leading to two-story guest wings surround a stunning pool and garden area. In fact, the property was once a nursery, and many of the old roses remain as part of the landscape. Ask for a garden-view room.

The newly renovated and elegant Terrace Grille, redone in wonderful earth tones, overlooks the pool and gardens. "We bring all our out-of-town guests here," says guest Harold Coleman. "Everything is great! Not traditional. And the garden is so pleasant. It's one of the reasons we come here."

Across the garden, the Rose Petal Facial at The Spa at Montecito Heights offers a tranquil diversion from a day of wine and roses or lounging poolside. A special skin care treatment is designed specifically to soothe and hydrate even the driest of skin. The aromas, the textures and the laying on of rose petals – it's deliriously floral.

Hidden away, Relais du Soleil is a historic ranch house built in the early 1900s. It sits on the edge of Calabazas Creek and has acres of rolling green lawns. The caretaker, Tim Korn, has painstakingly cultivated the heritage roses that have been part of the property for generations. Small bouquets find their way into guest rooms or garnish breakfast plates of poached pears stuffed with crème fraîche. The accommodations are casual – here, it's all about the location, particularly if seclusion is what they seek. The surprise to this truly secret garden is the in-house artist Brian Tedrick, whose whimsical and majestic iron sculptures dot the property and can be toured by appointment.

In rose-rich Sonoma County, where there are approximately 250 wineries and incomparable gardens, the enjoyment of wine and roses will go far beyond any fantasy.

*For more information, contact the Sonoma County Tourism Bureau at [SonomaCounty.com](http://SonomaCounty.com) or the Santa Rosa Convention & Visitors Bureau at [VisitSantaRosa.com](http://VisitSantaRosa.com).*

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