

Wine for a Change

By Risa Wyatt, Wine Enthusiast Magazine - Issue: February 2009

In Washington DC, the Napa Valley is not just the toast of the town—wines from the acclaimed viticultural region delivered the first toasts to Barack Obama as 44th President of the United States.

At the Inaugural Luncheon for President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden immediately following the swearing-in ceremony, three Napa Valley wines accompanied the three courses: 2007 Duckhorn Vineyards Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (paired with seafood stew), 2005 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (which accompanied the main course of pheasant and duck with sour-cherry chutney and molasses sweet potatoes), and Korbel Natural "Special Inaugural Cuvee" sparkling wine, which was served alongside apple-cinnamon sponge cake). Read Hail the Chief, the Chef and the Winemaker for a more comments on the luncheon's food-and-wine pairings.

"It's a huge honor for us—magnified by the fact that they served two of our wines," says Bill Nancarrow, Duckhorn winemaker. (Goldeneye belongs to the Duckhorn family of wines.) "And it's made even more special because of the excitement surrounding Mr. Obama."

A tradition dating to 1897, the welcoming lunch was hosted by the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies (JCCIC) at Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol. The menu tied its tastes to Abraham Lincoln, who favored simple foods including root vegetables, wild game, and his favorite dessert—apple cake. [Click here for the complete menu and recipes.](#)

Wines and winemakers from the Napa Valley wines have been featured and feted at other top-tier inaugural events in Washington. "The feeling here is electric—even though you're among hundreds of thousand of people, you feel completely connected with everyone," recounts Amelia Ceja, president of Ceja Vineyards. "For me it's especially thrilling because my family story has so many parallels with Mr. Obama's. I came to Napa from Mexico as an immigrant when I was 12 years old."

On Monday evening, January 19, Ceja was one of six winemakers highlighted at a reception for constituents hosted by Congressman Mike Thompson of California's 1st District, which encompasses the Napa Valley. A citizen of Middle-earth dropped in too: actor Ian McKellen, whose roles include Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The 200+ guests nibbled on grilled vegetables, spicy shrimp, and steak hors d'oeuvres as they enjoyed wines from featured vintners including:

Amelia Ceja / Ceja Vineyards
2007 Ceja Vineyards Carneros Chardonnay
2006 Ceja Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

Ambassador Kathryn and Craig Hall / Hall Winery
2005 Hall Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
2007 Hall T Bar T Ranch Sauvignon Blanc

John Shafer / Shafer Vineyards
2006 Shafer Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay
2006 Shafer Napa Valley Merlot

Garen and Shari Staglin / Staglin Family Vineyards
2006 Staglin Salus Estate Chardonnay

John Williams / Frog's Leap Winery
2007 Frog's Leap Napa Valley Chardonnay
2006 Frog's Leap Rutherford Napa Valley Merlot