

# Spring Mountain

"WE'RE SORT OF A NEIGHBORLY BUT PRIVATE GROUP," says Michael Marston of Marston Family Vineyard, referring to the winegrowers of Spring Mountain District, near the town of St. Helena in Napa Valley. "I didn't get around to paving the road for 20 years."

It's true that there is a low-key feel to Spring Mountain. Great Cabernet has been produced up here since the 1870s, but it wasn't until the late 1980s that vineyard



owners decided to apply for an American Viticultural Area designation (it finally came through in 1993).

Since then, and especially in the last three or four years, Spring Mountain Cabernet seems to get mentioned more and more. What sets it apart? "The region mostly faces east, and in the morning the vineyards are above the fog, so there's more sunlight," says Tom Ferrell, general manager of Spring Mountain Vineyard. "The cool afternoons help produce wines with tremendous color and bright, berrylike character." That climate also gives the wines a very long life: The best bottles can age well for decades.

## BOTTLES TO BUY

Look for Cabernets from Sherwin Family Vineyards, Peacock Family Vineyard and, particularly, Marston Family Vineyard.

The **2001 Marston Family Vineyard Cabernet (\$65)** is a seductive wine that is loaded with sweet black-currant flavor and velvety tannins. The **2001 Spring Mountain Vineyard Elivette (\$90)**, seamlessly mixes Cabernet flavor and dark, spicy tannins. The **2001 Vineyard 7 and 8 Vineyard 7 Estate (\$85)** hews to a more Bordelais line—ex-Château Latour winemaker Christian LeSommer consults here—with pure red-currant fruit. The **2001 Terra**

Country  
**United States**

Grape  
**Cabernet**

**Valentine (\$35)** offers intense black-cherry flavor and is very appealing, especially at this price.

## PERFECT PAIRING

This tagliarini with pork and lamb meatballs (recipe at right) can stand up to a big wine like the **2001 Beringer Marston Vineyard Cabernet (\$80)**, with its plum and chocolate notes.

## Tagliarini with Almond-Arugula Pesto and Meatballs

TOTAL: 45 MIN

6 SERVINGS

- 1½ pounds ground pork
- ½ pound ground lamb
- ½ medium red onion, minced
- ¼ cup dry red wine
- 1 tablespoon minced parsley
- 1½ teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon chopped thyme
- ½ teaspoon ground fennel seeds
- ¼ teaspoon crushed lavender
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 3 medium garlic cloves, minced
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 10 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 1 6-ounce bunch of arugula
- ½ cup unsalted roasted almonds, chopped
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
- 1¼ pounds fresh tagliarini

1. In a bowl, mix the pork and lamb with the onion, wine, parsley, zest, thyme, fennel, lavender and red pepper. Add one-third of the garlic, 2 teaspoons of salt and ½ teaspoon of pepper. Roll the mixture into 1-inch meatballs.

2. In a very large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil. Add the meatballs and cook over moderately high heat, turning frequently, until browned, 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to moderate and cook for 5 minutes longer, or until no trace of pink remains. Transfer to a plate.

3. In a food processor, puree the arugula with the almonds, ½ cup of Parmesan and the remaining ½ cup of olive oil and garlic. Scrape the pesto into a bowl; season with salt and pepper.

4. In a pot of boiling salted water, cook the pasta until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of the cooking water. Drain the pasta; transfer it to bowl. Toss the pasta with the pesto and ½ cup of the cooking water; add more water if the sauce is dry. Serve with the meatballs and more Parmesan and olive oil. —*Duskie Estes and John Stewart, chefs and co-owners, Zazu, Santa Rosa, California*