

Sunset

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Fall

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Food | Wine guide

Ladera Vineyards offers lantern tours this month—spirits to go with their wine?

Wine and spirits

Some ghost wineries live up to their name

BY SARA SCHNEIDER

AT BERINGER VINEYARDS' stately Rhine House in St. Helena, California, nighttime workers often hear footsteps where there are no people. A translucent woman wanders the upstairs hall of the old Manor House at Stags' Leap Winery in Napa. And *La Presencia* haunts tank 19 in the Red Barn at Frog's Leap in Rutherford.

What these spirits have in common is that the structures they inhabit are also ghosts—a designation loosely given to wineries operating in Northern California before the 18th Amendment banning the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" was ratified in 1919. Prohibition effectively killed most of them.

The ghost wineries are the skeletons in the industry's collective closet: Many were

built, so to speak, on the backs of Chinese laborers, who erected the thick stone walls and toiled in the vineyards. They're also reminders of Northern California's first glory days, when "Napa" became an important wine credential in the world. Some wineries—like Far Niente, Spottswoode, and Ladera, in addition to the "haunted" ones preceding—have been restored to their former grandeur (and functionality).

This month, if you're in the area, you can take a lantern tour of Ladera Vineyards on Howell Mountain (by appointment only; \$50, including tasting; 150 White Cottage Rd. S., Angwin, CA; laderavineyards.com or 707/965-2445). Go to sunset.com/ghostwineries for a list of other ghost wineries you can visit.

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