

KRIS MARGERUM

Head Sommelier, Auberge du Soleil

As head sommelier of Auberge du Soleil, Napa Valley's renowned country inn, Kris Margerum follows a simple philosophy when selecting his restaurant's wines: One plus one can equal three. The right wine complements the food, and together, they create an unforgettable experience. Margerum has been in pursuit of the perfect food and wine pairings at Auberge du Soleil for more than seven years, even before receiving his head sommelier title in 1999, during which time he has developed close relationships with the top wine makers of Napa Valley. His wine list currently offers 1,500 selections from a 17,000-bottle cellar and has been awarded *Wine Spectator's* Award of Excellence for the past five years.

Margerum works in partnership with executive chef Richard Reddington to create the best possible food and wine pairings for the six-course Chef's Menu, the nine-course Epicurean Menu and all other dishes Reddington dreams up in his kitchen. Margerum is also responsible for the restaurant staff's wine education and conducts wine tastings and advanced level winery tours for them on a regular basis.

"A couple of years ago, I started conducting blind tastings," recalls Margerum. "This allows me to evaluate each wine on its own merits, without prejudice. I taste more than 100 wines a week to find four or five that meet my ideals and make the wine list and hope our guests can benefit from knowing that each wine has been hand selected."

Margerum has developed wine lists for a number of other Auberge Resorts' properties, including the opening wine list for Esperanza in Los Cabos, Mexico, and CordeValle in San Martin, Calif. He is currently developing the wine list for Calistoga Ranch, the collection's newest property scheduled to open in September 2003.

Margerum's career with Auberge du Soleil spans more than 20 years. Before being appointed head sommelier, he acted as the restaurant's assistant food and beverage director for six years, helping to oversee daily operations, planning, budgeting, forecasting, hiring and reviews, monthly inventories and guest satisfaction management. Before that, he acted as assistant restaurant manager for the Auberge and was promoted to restaurant manager after a year. He began his career at Auberge du Soleil in the dining room as a server.

Margerum always strives to improve his knowledge of wine and his involvement in the Napa Valley wine community. He is currently preparing for the Advanced Sommelier test, after having passed the Sommelier Certificate course in 2001. Margerum is also a graduate of the Sterling School of Service and created the Napa Valley Sommelier Society, which meets quarterly at various Napa Valley restaurants to discuss common issues and strategies – and, of course, to taste wine.

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