

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION



WINEENTHUSIAST
MAGAZINE

THE INSIDERS' GUIDE TO

CALIFORNIA

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MASTERING MENDOCINO

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS VAST VINO PARADISE



MENDOCINO/LAKE'S TOP VARIETIES

● *Pinot Noir*

Mendocino Coast and Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs are relatively light in body, color and texture, with invigorating spice, floral and red fruit notes.

● *Chardonnay*

Typically display notes of apple, melon and vanilla. Thanks to bright acidity, coastal Mendocino Chardonnay is often used in sparkling wines.

● *Zinfandel*

Aromas include ripe cherries and blueberries, cocoa powder, toasted oak and coffee; others are more classically briary, with tobacco, nutmeg and black pepper accents.

● *Sauvignon Blanc*

Lake County Sauvignon Blanc is among the most sought-after of the North Coast's offerings, crisply ripe in stone fruit and tropical flavors.



To Mendocino County winemakers and growers, building a showcase winery or hanging out with wannabe collectors isn't what's important.

It's all about the wine.

Some grew up in Mendocino County, and it's what they know. Others left and came back to restore a family legacy. There are those who made wine elsewhere and ruled out other suitors, putting down deep roots here.

BEAUTY IN CONTRASTS

This is a vast county that possesses extreme coastal beauty, hot and cold climates, old and new vines, and a growing reputation for world-class wines.

Mendocino County has earned much of its fame from the wines of its Anderson Valley subappellation.

Cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay flourish here, as do Alsatian-style whites like Gewürztraminer, Riesling and Pinot Gris. The area also produces some of the best sparkling wines in California.

Inland, American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) like Redwood Valley and Hopland, farmed for decades by descendants of Italian immigrants, contribute old-vine Zinfandel, Carignan, Petite Sirah and Syrah.

The continued presence of many of these family farmers, and the tenacity shown by subsequent generations, has helped preserve many of these coveted old vines.

GREAT GRAPES, GREAT VALUE

In adjoining Lake County, grapes often cost half the price per ton of those grown in Napa Valley. Within the county, much excitement has grown around the Red Hills Lake County subappellation, high in elevation and rich in red volcanic soils.

There are also many areas within the AVA that excel with Sauvignon Blanc.

Two mountain ranges create the unique topography of Lake County. To the west are the Mayacamas Mountains, which also divide Napa Valley from most of Sonoma County.

On the east, the Vaca Ranges corner Napa's heat from escaping further inland toward Sacramento.

Here, vineyards grow at relatively high elevations—95% are more than 1,000 feet above sea level.

Growers and winemakers believe the elevation gives Lake County grapes a signature intensity of ripeness, but also keeps them in balance.

"We get small berries with thicker skins," says Peter Molnar, owner of Obsidian Ridge Vineyards. He's also chairman of the Lake County Winegrape Commission. "The soils, slope, elevation and temperature swings all contribute to the retention of acidity here."

“We wanted to show people we could compete on a stage with Sonoma and Napa. I think we’ve succeeded.”
— Alex MacGregor

Lake County's climate and porous, mineral-rich soils are also heavily impacted by Mount Konocti and Clear Lake, which help maintain some of California's cleanest air.

UP-AND-COMING AVA'S

Lake County remains quiet and sprawled out, the presence of its 28 wineries and 140 growers subtle. With five subregions already defined, Lake County awaits approval of two more AVAs, Big Valley and the Kelseyville Bench.

Longstanding Napa Valley star grower Andy Beckstoffer is also firmly entrenched in Lake County. He grows acres of Bordeaux varieties for such wineries as Duckhorn Vineyards, Joel Gott, Robledo Family, Steele and the Francis Coppola Diamond Collection.

In 2012, the Gallo family bought the gorgeous Snows Lake Vineyard in Red Hills Lake County, with 900 acres already planted with Cabernet Sauvignon and other grapes. This top-tier interest illustrates how Lake County has grown in stature.

● Cabernet Sauvignon

Lake County Cabernet, especially when it's grown on mountain ranges, has great tannic structure, intensely concentrated red-fruit flavors and balanced acidity.

MARK LUND (2)



warmer Dry Creek Valley and Chalk Hill appellations.

For years, area vintners have talked of dividing the Russian River Valley into as many as six or seven smaller AVAs, based on fog and temperature patterns and, to a lesser degree, soils. But the process has become so politicized—as have many similar discussions in other California AVAs—that no change seems likely anytime soon.

Cool-climate Pinots are generally higher in acidity and more tannic, while those from the warmer zones are softer and more approachable. Neither style is better—they're just different. The winemaker's technique also impacts the wines. Oddly enough, both styles age well, presuming the wines are well made.

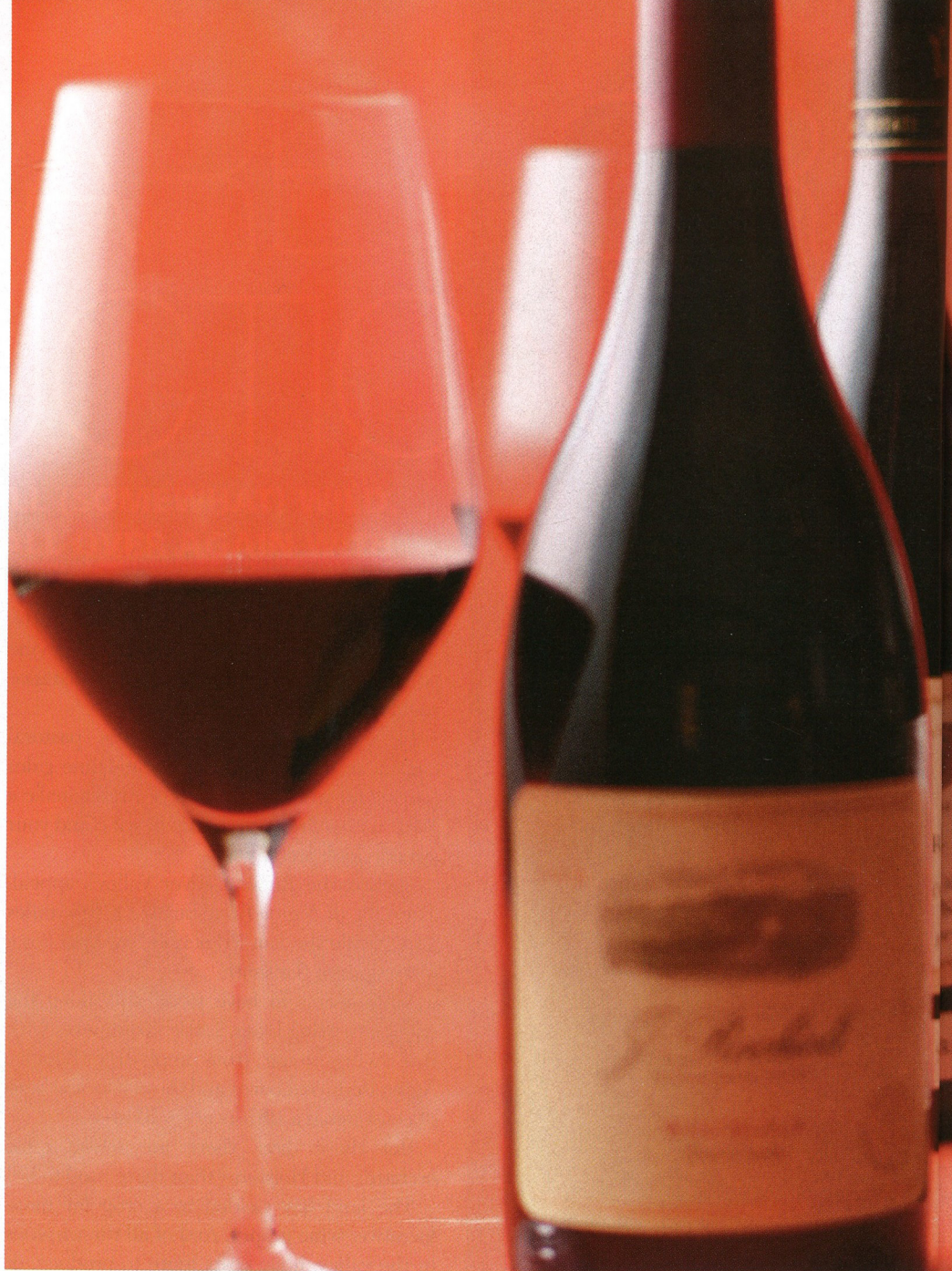
PICK OF THE PINOTS

It's risky to name the best producers. Someone's always left off the list, while new brands come on the market seemingly every day. (It's relatively easy for a newcomer to buy grapes from top vineyards.)

However, here are some of the best cool-climate Pinots: DeLoach, Dutton-Goldfield, Joseph Swan, Lynmar, Marimar Estate and Merry Edwards. Rochioli's and Williams Selyem's finest vineyards are located in the slightly warmer north. Their wines show early opulence, yet can develop for up to 20 years.

The best wines are produced in small quantities and are expensive. Compared to top Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, however, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir remains a bargain.

Pinot Noir has become popular throughout California's coastal regions, from Santa Barbara up to Mendocino. But history will show that in the Russian River Valley, modern American Pinot Noir was born and came of age.



■ RIDING THE RUSSIAN RIVER

If there's a Middle Earth in California, it sprawls along the winding, two-lane Highway 116, in the northwestern part of the Russian River Valley.

After the road turns west above Forestville, you almost expect to see a hobbit scurrying amid the little wooden cabins up on stilts, or disappearing behind a Redwood tree. The forests plunge down from the coastal hills.

Here and there where the sunshine pokes through the canopy, you might glimpse color-splashed pools of wild iris, lupine and

buttercup. The quaint old bridges that span the silvery Russian River themselves are fairytales.

The houses are on stilts because the River floods in wet years. Little villages like Rio Nido, Monte Rio and Duncans Mills hardly hold more than clusters of homes, a gas station, a little food market or a bar.

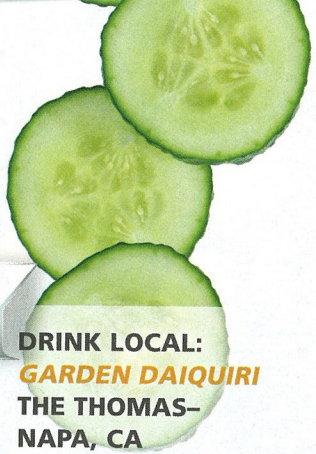
The main town, Guerneville, has long been a summer getaway for fog-weary San Franciscans. It's best known for its beaches, counterculture lifestyle and for the LGBT community.

Beyond Guerneville, Highway 116 emerges into the broad, sunlit plain of the Russian River estuary. Here, the hills lower, the river widens, waterfowl flock the skies and the air smells of the sea.

Where the Highway meets the coast road, Route 1, the Pacific Ocean shimmers in all its glory (that is, if the fog isn't hiding it).

On the dramatic shoreline, giant waves crash onto massive seaweed-covered rocks and wide-swath soft sand beaches smattered with enormous strands of kelp. Sea lions bask and bark on the beach, while the occasional whale spouts just offshore.





DRINK LOCAL:
GARDEN DAIQUIRI
THE THOMAS-
NAPA, CA

Mixmaster Naren Young uses basil picked fresh from The Thomas' garden co-op at nearby COPIA to lend herbal punch to this drink.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ ounce basil syrup
- 1½ ounces Caña Brava rum
- ¾ ounce lime juice
- ½ ounce Bénédictine
- ½ ounce cucumber purée
- 5 thin slices of cucumber

To make the basil syrup, simmer a handful of basil leaves in a cup of simple syrup for 30 minutes and cool. In a shaker with ice add all the liquids. Shake and strain into a coupe glass. Top with the cucumber slices.

Louis and Francis Bacon. Designed by postmodern architect Michael Graves, Clos Pegase showcases sculpture by Henry Moore and a six-foot-tall bronze thumb by César Baldaccini in the courtyard vineyard.

It doesn't cost a penny to ogle Napa Valley's outstanding architecture. Classic structures include Chateau Montelena, Inglenook, Beringer and The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. Over-the-top designs range from a medieval castle (Castello di Amorosa) to Persian palace (Darioush) and hunkering pyramid (Opus One).

The Napa Valley believes in equal opportunity epicurism. A local's secret, Pearl (Napa) fields ultra-seasonal menus anchored by faves such as Dungeness crab cakes and brined pork chops. JoLé (Calistoga) offers

local salmon and flatiron steak plus unusual cuts like lamb's tongue. Adjoining the Michelin-starred restaurant at Auberge du Soleil, the Bar revels in vineyard vistas.

Hotel rates vary with seasonal demand. Napa River Inn features adorable, cottage-like one-bedroom mobile homes. Embassy Suites Napa and DoubleTree American Canyon often present good deals.

**ROMANTIC
TOAST TO LOVE**

Plush red velvet and Baccarat chandeliers add allure to exclusive tastings in the Red Room at Raymond Vineyards. Terra Valentine resembles a hilltop castle complete with stained glass and massive doors crafted by the original owner. True love always finds

happiness with bubbly—try Schramsburg and Domaine Carneros.

Venture to Napa's wild side by biking byways or kayaking the Napa River. The Land Trust of Napa County leads free hikes, or people can follow the River to Ridge Trail that climbs to Skyline Wilderness Park.

The only fine dining restaurant at a winery in the Napa Valley, étoile at Domaine Chandon features indoor and outside seating. Chef Perry Hoffman elevates the subtle into the superlative in dishes such as Zabuton beef with mushroom ragoût. Relaxed yet elegant, Farm Restaurant encourages stay-around lounging with cozy firepits and bocce courts. Clubby with leather banquettes and basement bar, Goose and Gander shakes up the cocktail scene with retro-fresh libations.