

Wine Spectator

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**SONOMA
TRAVEL
2016**
THE BEST
LODGING,
FOOD AND
WINE

Sonoma
winemaker
Eva Dehlinger

**SOUTH AFRICA:
WHAT TO BUY**
**SPARKLING WINES
FOR SUMMER**
**MORE THAN 550
WINES RATED**



TOURING SONOMA GRAPE *by* GRAPE

[EXPLORE THIS DIVERSE REGION
USING WINE AS YOUR COMPASS]

BY TIM FISH

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
ALANNA HALE

Tucked away in northeastern Sonoma County, the Alexander Valley appellation comprises more than 15,000 acres of vineyards, including Cabernet Sauvignon and old-vine Zinfandel.

You won't need a GPS when you come to Sonoma County if you let the region's major wine grapes be the travel guide. Your passion for a specific varietal is the best map to follow. Sonoma is a diverse destination, with a varied climate and a landscape that ranges from pastures of grazing sheep to mountain ranges to the foggy Pacific Coast. With more than 400 wineries and 60,000 acres of vines spread through 17 distinctive American Viticultural Areas, Sonoma produces myriad styles of wine.

We've selected top Sonoma wineries in four categories—Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel—and put together an agenda that crisscrosses the wine roads of the county. We've suggested wineries that are open to the public and have recommended where to stay once your day is through. And of course we haven't overlooked food. We offer advice on satisfying options from casual dining to the area's premier kitchens. Have fun exploring, and enjoy the wine.

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CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Sonoma County has a long history of growing Cabernet Sauvignon, although many consumers may be more familiar with versions from Napa Valley, to the east. Cabernet was among the grapevines imported into California in 1862 by Agoston Haraszthy, founder of Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma Valley. While Napa's Inglenook was bottling varietal Cabernet as early as 1882, Sonoma producers typically blended the grape into wines with names such as Claret, often dispensed into jugs for consumers to carry home.

By the early 1970s, pioneering winemaker Rodney Strong was planting Cabernet Sauvignon in Sonoma's Alexander Valley, while Beringer was doing the same in nearby Knights Valley. Chateau St. Jean made its first Cabernet in 1975, using Sonoma Valley fruit. Today, the Alexander, Knights and Sonoma valleys remain the best regions for Cabernet in the county, where a total of 12,000 acres of the variety is currently planted.

Sonoma Cabernet is distinct from Napa Cabernet, displaying a winning style all its own. The climate is generally milder, making for leaner, less powerful, more elegant wines, compared to those from Napa. However, in recent years, more Cabernet has been planted in the mountains above Alexander and Knights valleys, and those wines show that Sonoma can make Cabernets with more density, tannins and richness.

In terms of wine touring, focus your excursions on two areas:

TOP SONOMA CABERNETS TO TRY NOW

WINERY	WINE	SCORE	RELEASE PRICE
CHATEAU ST. JEAN	Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley 2012	91	\$30
	Cinq Cépages Sonoma County 2012	90	\$75
KINSELLA	Cabernet Sauvignon Dry Creek Valley Jersey Boys Vineyard 2013	92	\$125
	Cabernet Sauvignon Dry Creek Valley Spencer Vineyard 2013	90	\$95
PETER MICHAEL	Les Pavots Knights Valley 2012	95	\$195
PRIDE	Claret Reserve Sonoma-Napa Counties 2012	93	\$135
	Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma-Napa Counties Reserve 2012	93	\$135
RODNEY STRONG	Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley Rockaway Single Vineyard 2012	94	\$75
	Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley Brothers Ridge Single Vineyard 2010	91	\$75

Alexander Valley and Sonoma Valley, where you'll find a concentration of wineries and services for visitors. There is only one winery in farther-flung Knights Valley, Peter Michael, and it is open to mailing-list customers only.



SONOMA

A navigational guide to the lodgings, eateries and tasting rooms featured in this story

Wineries

- 1 **ARISTA WINERY** 7015 Westside Road, Healdsburg; (707) 473-0606; www.aristawinery.com
- 2 **AUTEUR WINES** 373 First St. W., Sonoma; (707) 938-9211; www.auteurwines.com
- 3 **CHATEAU ST. JEAN** 8555 Sonoma Highway, Kenwood; (707) 257-5784; www.chateaufstjean.com
- 4 **DELOACH VINEYARDS** 1791 Olivet Road, Santa Rosa; (707) 755-3300; www.deloachvineyards.com
- 5 **DRY CREEK VINEYARD** 3770 Lambert Bridge Road, Healdsburg; (800) 864-9463; www.drycreekvineyard.com
- 6 **FERRARI-CARANO VINEYARDS AND WINERY** 8761 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg; (707) 433-6700; www.ferrari-carano.com
- 7 **HARTFORD FAMILY WINERY** 8075 Martinelli Road, Forestville; (707) 887-8030; www.hartfordwines.com
- 8 **PAUL HOBBS WINERY** 3355 Gravenstein Highway N., Sebastopol; (707) 834-9879; www.paulhobbswinery.com
- 9 **LANCASTER ESTATE** 15001 Chalk Hill Road, Healdsburg; (707) 433-8178; www.lancaster-estate.com
- 10 **MACROSTIE WINERY & VINEYARDS** 4605 Westside Road, Healdsburg; (707) 473-9303; www.macrostiewinery.com
- 11 **PATZ & HALL** 21200 Eighth St. E., Sonoma; (707) 265-7700; www.patzhall.com
- 12 **PRIDE MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS** 3000 Summit Trail, Santa Rosa; (707) 963-4949; www.pridewines.com
- 13 **RAM'S GATE WINERY** 28700 Arnold Drive, Sonoma; (707) 721-8700; www.ramsgatewinery.com
- 14 **RAVENSWOOD WINERY** 18701 Gehrcke Road, Sonoma; (707) 935-2332; www.ravenwoodwinery.com
- 15 **RIDGE VINEYARDS - LYTTON SPRINGS** 650 Lytton Springs Road, Healdsburg; (707) 433-7721; www.ridgevine.com
- 16 **J. ROCCHIOLI VINEYARDS & WINERY** 6192 Westside Road, Healdsburg; (707) 433-2305; www.rochiolwinery.com
- 17 **SEGHEGIO FAMILY VINEYARDS** 700 Grove St., Healdsburg; (707) 433-3579; www.seghegio.com
- 18 **SIDURI WINES** 981 Airway Court, Suites E & F, Santa Rosa; (707) 578-3882; www.siduri.com
- 19 **RODNEY STRONG VINEYARDS** 1455 Old Redwood Highway, Healdsburg; (707) 431-1533; www.rodneystrong.com
- 20 **THREE STICKS WINES** 143 W. Spain St., Sonoma; (707) 996-3328; www.threesticks.com

Hotels

- 1 **HOTEL LES MARS** 27 North St., Healdsburg; (707) 433-4211; www.hotelesmars.com
- 2 **FAIRMONT SONOMA MISSION INN & SPA** 100 Boyes Blvd., Sonoma; (707) 938-9000; www.fairmont.com/sonoma
- 3 **VINTNERS INN** 4350 Barnes Road, Santa Rosa; (707) 575-7350; www.vintnersinn.com

Restaurants

- 1 **BRAVAS TAPAS** 420 Center St., Healdsburg; (707) 433-7700; www.starkrestaurants.com/bravas.html
- 2 **CAFÉ LA HAYE** 140 E. Napa St., Sonoma; (707) 935-5994; www.cafelahaye.com
- 3 **DRY CREEK KITCHEN** 317 Healdsburg Ave., Healdsburg; (707) 431-0330; www.drycreekkitchen.com
- 4 **FARMHOUSE RESTAURANT** 7871 River Road, Forestville; (800) 464-6642; www.farmhouseinn.com/restaurant
- 5 **OSO SONOMA** 9 E. Napa St., Sonoma; (707) 931-6926; www.ososonoma.com
- 6 **SHED CAFÉ** 25 North St., Healdsburg; (707) 431-7433; www.healdsburgshed.com/food/shed-cafe
- 7 **VALETTE** 344 Center St., Healdsburg; (707) 473-0946; www.valettehealdsburg.com
- 8 **ZAZU KITCHEN + FARM** 6770 McKinley St., 150, Sebastopol; (707) 523-4814; www.zazurestaurant.com

WINERIES TO VISIT

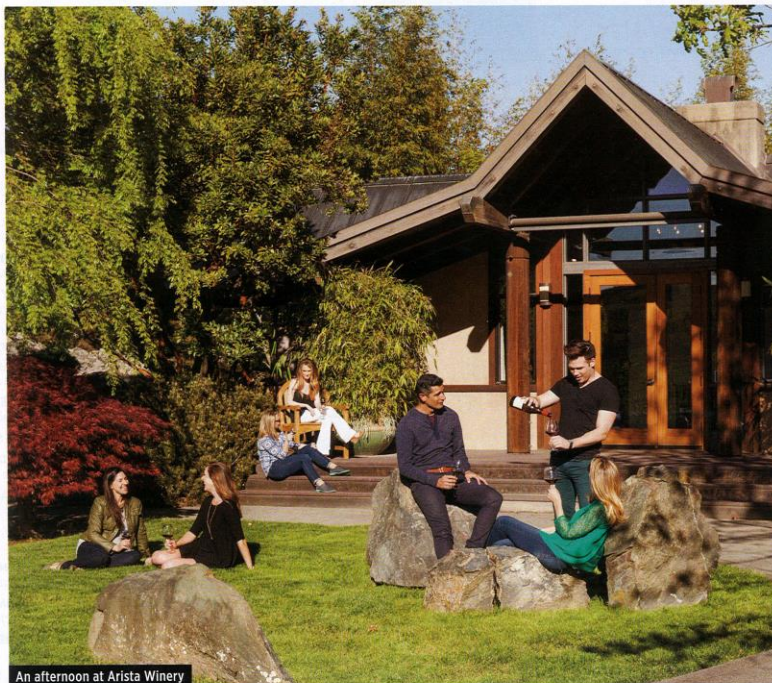
Pinot Noir

Arista Winery

7015 Westside Road, Healdsburg Telephone (707) 473-0606 Website www.aristawinery.com Open Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cost Tastings \$20-\$160

Even if it weren't producing some of the top Pinot Noirs in Sonoma, Arista would be a destination for its distinctive tasting room. The cottage, with its steep roofline and surrounding Japanese garden, would look at home outside Tokyo. Founded by the McWilliams family in 2002, Arista produces nearly a dozen Pinots, as well as Chardonnay, Zinfandel and Gewürztraminer, and a varying selection is offered in three different tasting options. Savor a glass as you sit by the fireplace or wander among the streams, waterfalls and moss-covered stones of the garden.

—Tim Fish



An afternoon at Arista Winery

Auteur Wines

373 First St. W., Sonoma Telephone (707) 938-9211 Website www.auteurwines.com Open Daily, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., with appointments required Sunday to Friday Cost Tastings \$25

Winemaker Kenneth Juhasz has a way with Pinot Noir, producing some impressive wines for Donum and Pali, among others. Auteur is his own label, which he runs with his wife, Laura. He learned the wine-making ropes in Oregon before transplanting to Sonoma Valley in 2002. They make a range of Pinot Noirs from vineyards in Northern California and Willamette Valley, as well as Chardonnay. Auteur's tasting room is a cottage just off historic Sonoma Plaza, where guests sit at communal tables either by a fireplace or on the patio, depending on the weather, for tastings. It's a laid-back atmosphere that allows you to focus on the wines and perhaps meet a fellow Pinot lover.

—T.F.

DeLoach Vineyards

1791 Olivet Road, Santa Rosa Telephone (707) 755-3300 Website www.deloachvineyards.com Open Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with appointments required Monday to Thursday Cost Tastings \$30-\$100

Cecil DeLoach was a 1970s pioneer of Sonoma wine, and his winery is now thriving in the hands of the larger-than-life Jean-Charles Boisset, scion of the Burgundy giant. The winemaking style is strictly Californian: supple, fruit-forward wines. The portfolio includes nearly a dozen Pinot Noirs from Russian River and beyond, as well as a range of Chardonnays and Zinfandels. At the end of a long drive lined by vineyards lies the winery, whose manicured landscape includes a garden, outdoor art and a picnic area. DeLoach offers guests a gamut of experiences, from a tour

of the vineyard to a cellar tasting amid costumed characters depicting the 17th-century French royal court.

—T.F.

Patz & Hall

21200 Eighth St. E., Sonoma Telephone (707) 265-7700 Website www.patzhall.com Open Thursday to Monday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., by appointment Cost Tasting \$30-\$75

The tasting experience at Patz & Hall feels like home. Partners Donald Patz, Heather Patz, James Hall and Anne Moses have adorned the walls of their 8,000-square-foot "Sonoma House" with photos of their winegrowers, quite like portraits of family members. Nestled within a 10-acre vineyard on the outskirts of Sonoma, the house offers a contemporary and relaxed atmosphere. Tastings focus on educating visitors about the regions and growers behind the label's single-vineyard Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. Guests can opt for a casual setting at the tasting bar, which offers four wines, or spring for a salon tasting, which includes six wines paired with imaginative noshes in a private setting.

—Aaron Romano

Siduri Wines

981 Airway Court, Suites E & F, Santa Rosa Telephone (707) 578-3882 Website www.siduri.com Open Daily, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., by appointment Cost Tastings free-\$10

The atmosphere at Siduri might not wow the casual tourist, but it's heaven for Pinot nerds. At this no-frills warehouse in a Santa Rosa