

BRIDES

DESTINATION WEDDINGS

Everything You Need to Know About Having a California Wine Country Wedding

You don't need to be a sommelier to wed in these gorgeous vineyards.

By Kathryn Romeyn Published on May 1, 2018

There's only one choice when it comes to a destination wedding for true oenophiles: California's dreamily **gorgeous Napa and Sonoma counties**. The bucolic vineyard-lined region beyond San Francisco is acclaimed for not just vino, but world-class food, too, making it the ultimate venue for couples who value those most delicious aspects of their big days. There's only one little problem: The counties are actually quite strict about where weddings can be held.

The fantasy may be saying "I do" amid an expansive vineyard, but in fact **many wineries** aren't able to get permitted to hold weddings, so the options are somewhat limited in Napa for the actual ceremony and reception. However, there are more than a few beautiful hotel options along with essentially hundreds for the rehearsal or welcome dinner (wineries will happily do these, essentially a white dress can't be spotted amid vines), which for a destination wedding can be equally as lavish or thoughtful since all the guests who've traveled will be attending. Additionally, since it's California, the weather nearly year-round is lovely, with events happening that incorporate both indoor and outdoor space, comfortably, in all 12 months (that's what heat lamps are for!).

More traditional venues include **Buena Vista Winery**, the oldest winery in all of California. Its 19th-century Champagne cellars are worth a visit alone, but the restored stonework and fountain-studded grounds of the 150-plus-year-old estate makes a flawless setting. Sonoma isn't as strict, so you'll find more wineries and outdoor spaces where anything goes. Healdsburg, an adorable town with incredible dining and drinking destinations, has a plethora of in-demand options, such as under a cork oak tree at **Ru's Farm**—which books up rather quickly—or Chalk Hill, a massively large winery and estate that includes, among other spots, the glass-walled Estate Pavilion and an elevated park with 500-year-old oaks. Hotel Healdsburg is another location where Charlie Palmer's touch is on the food, and rehearsal dinners are possible at its eco-cool sister property, the h2hotel, right in town, under an undulating living green roof.