

Columbia ★ Star

Columbia's locally owned weekly newspaper since 1963

Winederlust

Where to go in Sonoma now

By Erlinda A. Doherty



La Hacienda at Scribe Winery

California welcomes 23.6 million visitors in search of the country's best wine each year. Most of those wine lovers visit the North Coast American Viticultural Area (AVA), one of California's five "super AVAs" and home to the most esteemed wine regions in the U.S.—Napa and Sonoma. In my last column, I focused on Napa; here I will spotlight the Sonoma region.

Double the size of Napa, and more expansive at 70,000 acres, Sonoma is a laid-back, rustic version of its glitzy counterpart. About 6 percent of California's total wine is produced here—Napa produces 4 percent—but with soil more diverse than France, its 18 distinct wine regions are astoundingly unique. While Cabernet Sauvignon is king in Napa,

Chardonnay is the most planted varietal in Sonoma at 15,000 vineyard acres planted. Pinot Noir is Sonoma's most abundant red grape varietal at 12,500 acres.

With 400 wineries to visit in Sonoma, I've selected a few standouts that represent the region's tradition; provide a fascinating educational experience; and demonstrate the future of winemaking.

For Sonoma Tradition

Home to both Buena Vista winery, California's oldest commercial winery, and Gundlach Bundschu winery, California's oldest family-run winery, the Sonoma Valley is known as the birthplace of the California wine industry.

Start at Buena Vista winery near downtown Sonoma and learn about the legacy of Agoston Haraszthy who pioneered viticultural practices and established California's first premium winery in 1857. Now under the winemaking estate of Jean-Charles Boisset, the winery has been designated a historic landmark and produces expressive wines from several of Sonoma's sub-AVA's.

www.buenavistawinery.com

