

THE MANUAL

The Essential Guide for Men

Food & Drink, Travel

THE MANUAL GUIDE TO SONOMA COUNTY WINES

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Chances are, if you know about the [Napa Valley](#) American Viticultural Area (AVA), then you know about its bigger brother (in size, not number of wineries) right next door, Sonoma County. Encompassing 60,065 acres of planted vineyards (compared to the 40,000 of Napa Valley) across over 250 wineries in seventeen different AVAs (Check out our [guide to Napa Valley](#) for a definition of what AVAs are).

While Napa Valley is known for its Cabernet Sauvignons, the Sonoma Valley—at least originally—was known for its Zinfandels, America’s “heritage vine.” It’s not hard to find Zinfandel vines that date back fifty, sixty, or even one hundred years. Because of its size, though, and the diversity of the land—ranging from high mountains to coastal plains—the variety of grapes grown in Sonoma began to, well, grow. Cabernet Sauvignon appeared and persists, as have Merlot, Chardonnay, and a wide variety of other grapes.

Just as in Napa, there are a number of immediately recognizable names, such as [Kendall-Jackson Vineyard Estates](#), [Korbel Champagne Cellars](#), and [Ravenswood](#) (more on them in a bit). Just as in Napa, too, there are literally hundreds of quality wineries. To start, we’re going to offer five wineries we think you should check out as you start your Sonoma County journey.

It’s important to remember that each winery has different times that they are open to the public and, on top of that, different tasting packages (ranging from simple varietal tastings to intimate one-on-ones with leaders at the winery). It’s important to check out the wineries’ websites to double check on all information before heading out.

BUENA VISTA WINERY



When it comes to historic wineries, there are literally none that can beat Buena Vista. The oldest winery in California was started in 1857 by the self-proclaimed Count of Buena Vista, Agoston Haraszthy (a name which, we can only imagine, gets easier to pronounce the more wine one drinks), was reinvigorated by the Boisset family, who have continued the quality winemaking tradition. The 2014 Private Reserve Chardonnay is sourced from a vineyard on Sonoma Mountain offers up a rich wine experience, as does the 2012 Chateau Buena Vista Grand Reserve (a bold Cabernet Sauvignon only available at the winery). For those looking for something a little lighter, the 2014 Carneros Chardonnay is the way to go.