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The Hollywood Insider's Guide to Wining and Dining in Napa and Sonoma



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What's new and notable in Northern California wine country.

The wildfires haven't kept California's wine country — Napa and Sonoma — down. It continues to gain in popularity as a destination, especially as both counties collect superluxe new hotels, even more world-class dining and VIP amenities. Jessica Biel and Justin Timberlake are regulars, as is Will Ferrell, and it's also a favorite place for girlfriends to retreat (Chelsea Handler, Lea Michele and Katharine McPhee). "It's the perfect departure from big-city living into a beautiful rural environment where life is much calmer and where the people are welcoming," says former Disney studio president Rich Frank, who left Hollywood to found Calistoga's Frank Family Wines. "You can actually have quality of life here, breathe fresh air and not sit in traffic for hours. Oh, and drink some of the best wine in the world."

Napa venues like Tamber Bey Winery, Castello Amaroso, Darioush and Italics provide jaw-dropping settings that lure filmmakers. The Sonoma town of Bodega Bay attracted Felix Von Groeningen, who recently filmed *Beautiful Boy* (starring Steve Carell and Timothee Chalamet) there, and *13 Reasons Why* just set up for months of shooting in downtown Sonoma.

Brenda Lhormer, co-founder and co-director of the Napa Valley Film Festival (Nov. 7-11) — which draws the likes of Kevin Costner, Matthew McConaughey, Pierce Brosnan and Michelle Monaghan for premieres and culinary demos and tastings — says the festival is "everything that's awesome about Napa, with film."

NVFF's elaborate 24 Vintner Dinners are over-the-top affairs at super-private, top-tier wineries (think Miner Family Winery, Charles Krug and Raymond Vineyards' Baccarat-coated crystal barrel room). "You're meeting film industry luminaries in a really unique and laidback, beautifully elegant environment — it's the opposite of a crazy-ass Hollywood party," she says. "It's lovely." Says Lea Thompson, who premiered her *Year of Spectacular Men* at last year's festival: "We had parties in these beautiful art galleries, and wonderful dinners. It's like a vacation for independent filmmakers, celebrating them with some glamour and luxury."

There are seemingly endless plush properties in which to sleep off wine hangovers and food comas, and there are more coming — the 85-room Four Seasons Resort and Residences Napa Valley is set to debut in early 2019.