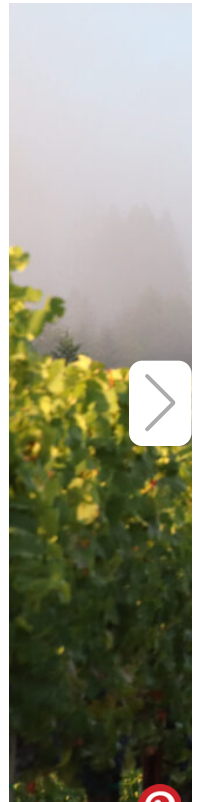




These Are the Most Iconic Vineyards in Sonoma County

Our picks for some of the county's most iconic vineyards – and amazing wines to try from each site.



SLIDE 1 OF 46

Hirsch Vineyards northeast of Jenner. (Courtesy Hirsch Vineyards)



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By Tina Caputo, Abigail Peterson and Carey Sweet

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Any winemaker worth their boots will tell you that great wines are made in the field. To work with grapes that have been grown with integrity, and to allow that fruit to express the ineffable qualities of soil and sun and weather, is what winemaking is all about.

If you're new to wines from Sonoma County, think of this feature as an interesting cross-section of what the county is known for, at all price ranges — a shortcut to worthwhile sites and bottles to try. When you come across one of these vineyards or producers at a local bottle shop or on a restaurant's wine list, you're in for an interesting adventure.

Level up by using individual listings to seek out different expressions of a single vineyard from two or more different producers. Open the wines side-by-side, and see what you can taste in the way each winemaker has interpreted those grapes. Wines made

from these celebrated sites “wear their dirt,” as we like to say — they bring our region to life.



Hirsch Vineyards

Fort Ross-Seaview AVA, 6 miles northeast of Jenner

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay



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Producers: Hirsch Vineyards, Williams Selyem, Twomey

This renowned vineyard wouldn't exist without the vision of David Hirsch, who bought a former sheep ranch on a remote, windswept ridgetop with a view of the Pacific in 1978 and planted his first vines two years later. As the story goes, Hirsch, who had worked in the fashion business, didn't necessarily have grapegrowing in mind for the second chapter of his life. A winemaker friend visiting from Santa Cruz told Hirsch that if he planted grapes, the wines could be world-class. The "geologic jumble" of a site, a mile from the San Andreas fault, with 72 planted acres across dozens of different soil types, has been farmed biodynamically since 2011.

"Viticulture is a multi-generational endeavor. My father is going to be 80 next month, and he's planting new vineyards, and replanting vineyards — and, you know, he's not doing it for himself. It's something that you do for the future, not knowing when the peak expression of that vineyard will emerge. Maybe somebody else will make those wines. It's about getting to be a part of something that is so much bigger than us, and has such a long timescale." — **Jasmine Hirsch, winemaker, Hirsch Vineyards**

Three to Try:

Hirsch Vineyards 2021 "San Andreas Fault" Estate Pinot Noir, \$65. hirschvineyards.com

Williams Selyem 2021 Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$100. williamsselyem.com

Twomey 2021 Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$95. twomey.com



Atop Monte Rosso Vineyard above Valley of the Moon, 1880's zinfandel grapes are in veraison, Saturday, August 1, 2020. (Kent Porter / The Press Democrat)

Monte Rosso

Moon Mountain AVA, in Sonoma Valley, about 2.5 miles northeast of Agua Caliente

Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Semillon

Producers: Louis M. Martini, Scribe Winery, Robert Biale Vineyards, Turley Wine Cellars

This storied vineyard — originally called Mount Pisgah — dates back to 1886, when San Francisco grocers Emmanuel Goldstein and Benjamin Dreyfus planted Zinfandel and Sémillon at the site. Some of their original vines are still in production today, and the Sémillon plantings are among the world’s oldest. Louis M. Martini bought the vineyard in 1938 and renamed it Monte Rosso (“red mountain”) for its red volcanic soils. He added Cabernet Sauvignon in 1940 — also still in production — then expanded plantings to include Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Rhône varieties. Gallo bought the 250-acre vineyard in 2022 along with Louis M. Martini Winery.

“Cabernet Sauvignon from Monte Rosso has this beautiful blue fruit quality and floral aspect. The tannins are usually what you expect with mountain fruit or very high elevation fruit — very rustic — but they are much more supple at lower Brix levels. For the style of wines we like to make, which are a little bit lower in alcohol and higher acidity, that’s a perfect match for us.” –

Gustavo Sotelo, director of winemaking, Scribe Winery

Three to Try:

Louis M. Martini Winery 2021 Monte Rosso Vineyard Gnarly Vine Zinfandel, \$100. louismartini.com

Scribe Winery 2021 Monte Rosso Cabernet Sauvignon, \$88. scribewinery.com

Robert Biale Vineyards 2022 Monte Rosso Zinfandel, \$85. biale.com



Gap's Crown vineyard northeast of Penngrove. (Dan Quiñones/Courtesy Three Sticks Wines)



Pinot Noir vines just a few days from picking at Gap's Crown Vineyard Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023, in the hills east of Penngrove. The grapes from the 400-acre vineyard are coveted by Kosta Browne, Three Sticks, Gary Farrell, Marine Layer and other highly regarded Sonoma County wineries. (John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Gap's Crown

Petaluma Gap AVA, 3.5 miles northeast of Penngrove

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay

Producers: Three Sticks Wines, Sojourn Cellars, Blue Farm Wines, Patz & Hall Winery, Trombetta Family Wines

Many winemakers view this 137-acre hillside vineyard as the crown jewel of the Petaluma Gap appellation. Sitting at an elevation of 300-900 feet, the rocky site is heavily impacted by cooling afternoon winds and fog that flow from the Pacific Ocean through a gap in the coastal mountain range, through the town of Petaluma and south to San Pablo Bay.

Premier Pacific Vineyards developed Gap's Crown in 2002-2005, and in 2012, Bill Price III of Three Sticks Wines purchased the vineyard. Maritime influence, diverse soils and a range of elevations all contribute to the concentration and balance of Gap's Crown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

"I work with two Pinot Noir clones, Dijon 667 and Dijon 777, and Gap's Crown showcases them beautifully. The constant breeze helps drive the deep fruit and spicy profile of the wine. What I love about the vineyard is that it always delivers. Even with the fluctuating weather each year, the vines are always balanced and can handle the changes in weather. My Gap's Crown bottling has a distinct voice and adds a great, full-bodied, slightly more coastal element to my lineup of Pinot Noir." – **Anne Moller-Racke, winegrower and proprietor, Blue Farm Wines**

Three to Try:

Three Sticks Wines 2021 Gap's Crown Chardonnay, \$75. threestickswines.com

Blue Farm Wines 2021 Gap's Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$85. bluefarmwines.com

Sojourn Cellars 2022 Gap's Crown Pinot Noir, \$75. sojourncellars.com



David Ramey, winemaker at Ramey Wine Cellars, produces Chardonnay using grapes from Ritchie Vineyard near Forestville. (John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Ritchie Vineyard

Russian River Valley AVA, Eastside Road, 3 miles northeast of Forestville

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir

Producers: DeLoach Vineyards, Arista Winery, DuMOL, Domaine de la Rivière, Woodenhead Vintners, Ramey Wine Cellars

Planted in 1972, Kent Ritchie's property is iconic for its ancient seabed of sandy Goldridge soil laced with volcanic ash and pockets of tufa rocks. Original vines still thrive here, draping gnarled trunks on rock dappled grounds following the downslope of a volcanic vent jutting up through the sandstone — a rare terroir for Russian River Valley. Winemakers consistently sign up on a wish list to buy more fruit.

“Like all great vineyards, Ritchie has a factor limiting its vigor — in this case, the layer of tuff prevents vine roots from growing too deep (in search of water). Our 20 rows of vines happen to be an alluring field blend of Old Wente and Musqué selections —

part of the original 1972 planting — giving the wine structure, balance and aromatic complexity.” – **David Ramey, winemaker, Ramey Wine Cellars**

Three to Try:

Ramey Wine Cellars 2021 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay, \$85. rameywine.com

Woodenhead 2019 Ritchie Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$56. woodenheadwine.com

Domaine de la Rivière 2021 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay, \$85. domaineriviere.com



Leaves at Montecillo Vineyards are pulled to create airflow and sun exposure above the Valley of the Moon, Thursday, July 30, 2020. The head-trained Cabernet and other varietals were planted in the 1960s. To the west, Sonoma Mountain peaks above the typical summer marine layer. (Kent Porter / The Press Democrat)

Montecillo Vineyard

Moon Mountain AVA, at the top of Nelligan Road, near Glen Ellen

Cabernet Sauvignon

Producers: Stewart Cellars, Bedrock Wine Co., Turley Wine Cellars, Arnot-Roberts, Di Costanzo, Beta Wines, DuMOL

At the top of the Mayacamas Mountains that separate Sonoma from Napa, and topping out at 1,800-2,200 feet, Montecillo has views across the entire northern Sonoma Valley. The site was originally planted in the late 1850s, which invites a sense of awe at the fortitude it took to look up and imagine planting a vineyard at the wild, rocky, windswept mountain summit — entirely by hand. These days, Montecillo’s highly prized mountaintop Cabernet Sauvignon comes from dry-farmed vines that date to the 1960s. Blair Guthrie, winemaker at Stewart Cellars, which purchased Montecillo in 2022, has traced Montecillo’s history and believes his family is only the fourth owner in over 160 years.

*“It’s definitely a very magic site. We believe it was planted in 1857, which always blows my mind because California was barely a state. And it blows my mind that people were up on the mountain that early on — viticulture wasn’t really anything back then, and what was existing was all on the valley floor... The other thing is that the vineyard just does really well — it’s a very low-input vineyard. It seems to have this magic terroir where the soil is so rich and giving that the vineyard is just super healthy. Even in difficult years it still produces magic wine.” – **Blair Guthrie, winemaker, Stewart Cellars***

Three to Try:

Bedrock Wine Co. 2021 Montecillo Old Vine Cabernet Sauvignon. bedrockwineco.com

Beta Wines 2018 Montecillo Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. beta-wines.com

DuMOL 2021 Montecillo Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. dumol.com



Rob Fischer, winemaker at Marine Layer Wines, produces Vermentino from Las Brisas vineyard grapes. (Courtesy of Marine Layer Wines)

Las Brisas

Carneros AVA, off Ramal Road in Sonoma

Pinot Noir, Vermentino, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Albariño, Riesling

Producers: Mahoney Family Vineyards, Carneros Ranch, Ryne Cellars, Marine Layer Wines, Bouchaine Vineyards

Francis Mahoney, a champion of Carneros as a prime growing region for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay since the 1970s, planted Las Brisas in 1997 at the site of a former dairy farm. Its name pays tribute to the winds that drive morning fog from the vineyards and deliver cooling marine breezes in the late afternoon. These conditions help the grapes mature slowly, with plenty of hang time, resulting in a bright and juicy profile across varieties. Still owned by Mahoney's Carneros Wine Company, Las Brisas is planted to 91 acres, including Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Vermentino, Pinot Blanc, Albariño and Riesling.

*“I’ve been a longtime admirer of Francis Mahoney and his willingness to plant alternative white varieties. Being at the southern end of Sonoma County brings a great cooling effect to the vineyard that buffers the warmer temperatures in areas to the north. There’s a great natural acidity in these varieties at this vineyard, and distinct freshness and vibrancy that weaves really well into the Marine Layer style of wines.” – **Rob Fischer, winemaker, Marine Layer Wines***

Three to Try:

Bouchaine Vineyards 2022 Las Brisas Vineyard Pinot Blanc, \$46. bouchaine.com

Mahoney Family Vineyards 2023 Las Brisas Vineyard Albariño, \$26. carneroswinecompany.com

Marine Layer Wines 2023 Las Brisas Vineyard Vermentino, \$35. marinelayerwines.com



Anaba Wines, in Sonoma, produces Pinot Noir from Roberts Road Vineyard. (Courtney Wilson)

Roberts Road Vineyard

Sonoma Coast and Petaluma Gap AVAs, 10 miles north of Petaluma

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay

Producers: Montagne Russe, Saintsbury Winery, Anaba Wines

The Sangiacomo family farms 1,600 acres across multiple Sonoma County sites, yet Roberts Road stands out as the growers' most sought-after vineyard. Planted in 1999 to 130 acres of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, the Roberts Road site boasts the uncommon feature of having two watersheds. The vineyard is distinguished by its marine influence and fog that hangs in the vineyard from morning until mid-day. These conditions foster a long, slow ripening process — Roberts Road is typically the last Sangiacomo vineyard to be harvested each year — and exceptionally balanced grapes.

“Roberts Road is one of our latest-ripening Pinots. More coastal vineyards have that bright fruit right off the bat, whereas this also has a lot of other layers going on. It plays well into that nice blend of beautiful fruit, but it has a lot more rustic character as well. The Sangiacomos really care about their land and the people who work for them, and they want everybody to make great wine.” — **Katy Wilson, winemaker, Anaba Wines**

Three to Try:

Anaba Wines 2021 Pinot Noir, Sangiacomo Roberts Road, \$74. anabawines.com

Montagne Russe 2021 Roberts Road Chardonnay, \$50. russewines.com

Saintsbury Winery 2022 Roberts Road Pinot Noir, \$80. saintsbury.com



A Ford E-Transit electric van is parked next to vine rows Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022, at Dutton Ranch in Sebastopol during a Ford Motor Company demonstration of electric professional vehicles being tested with certain Sonoma County Winegrowers members. (Courtesy of Ford Motor Company)

Dutton Ranch

Green Valley AVA, about 6 miles northwest of Sebastopol

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir

Producers: The Calling, Patz & Hall Winery, Dutton-Goldfield Winery, Kistler Vineyards, Martin Ray Vineyard & Winery

Legendary in Sonoma County grapegrowing circles, the Dutton family farms 1,400 acres of winegrapes and organic apples in the Russian River Valley, Green Valley and Sonoma Coast. The family's winery property and ranch near Sebastopol is home to the Dutton Ranch vineyard — the grower's main fruit source and a vineyard designate since 1979.

Warren Dutton planted the original 35-acre plot to Chardonnay in 1967 and it has since grown to include 30 acres of Chardonnay and 10 acres of Pinot Noir. Aside from meticulous farming by Warren's son Steve Dutton, the vineyard's special sauce is its location in Green Valley, which runs cooler than other parts of Russian River Valley.

"The distinctiveness of the vineyard is the personality of the site itself. Our Dutton Chardonnay is like our other wines from the neighborhood, but there is an uncanny apple-like sense to the finished wine. It's as much about the texture, like the snap of biting into a just-ripe Gravenstein apple, as the flavors. With the Pinot Noirs the Duttons grow for us, they have a sense of effortlessness and precision. Working with them is a true partnership and there isn't a doubt in my mind that it makes the wines better." –

Jason Kesner, winemaker, Kistler Vineyards

Three to Try:

The Calling 2022 Roberts Road Chardonnay, \$35. thecallingwine.com

Dutton-Goldfield Winery 2022 Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir, \$50. duttongoldfield.com

Martin Ray 2023 Concrete Chardonnay, \$43. martinraywinery.com



Durell Vineyard in Sonoma. (Dan Quiñones/Courtesy Three Sticks Wines)

Durell Vineyard

Sonoma Coast AVA, off Arnold Drive, Sonoma

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Syrah

Producers: Three Sticks Wines, DeLoach Vineyards, Kistler Vineyards, Sojourn Cellars, Scribe Winery, Dunstan Wines, La Crema Winery, Banshee Wines, Auteur Wines

This landmark 600-acre ranch with 160 acres of vines lies in a unique setting at the intersection of three different grapegrowing regions, offering elements of each — the cool and foggy coast, the moderating bay influence from the Carneros, and the warmer temperatures of the Sonoma Valley. Nearly every afternoon, a stiff wind blows in, which slows down the ripening of the grapes and helps develop fruit of a nuanced, complex character. It's a pioneering site in the county, first planted in the 1970s and spawning dozens of top wines from different producers over the years, including its own widely propagated clone of Syrah. The vineyard is owned by vintner Bill Price of Three Sticks Wines, which offers a guided hike through the vineyard on Sundays — an experience worth seeking out.

*“I always feel when I’m at Durell that I’m at the confluence of great forces and powers. As you go into the different areas, you see that in the soil, too — you see the ancient riverbeds, you see the sandy, silty soil up top and you see the volcanic pumice stones. You see all this difference and you just know that things are swirling around that one spot. It feels like a sort of nexus.” — **Ryan Prichard, director of winemaking, Three Sticks Wines***

Three to Try:

Three Sticks Wine 2022 Durell Vineyard Origin Chardonnay, \$70. threestickswines.com

Dunstan Wines 2021 Durell Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$75. dunstanwines.com

Banshee Winery 2019 Durell Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$70. bansheewines.com



Charlie Heintz, owner of Charles Heintz Vineyards & Winery, among the rows of chardonnay grapes at his vineyard, near Occidental. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)

Charles Heintz Vineyard

Sonoma Coast AVA, 1.5 miles northeast of Occidental

Chardonnay

Producers: DuMOL, The Calling, Williams Selyem, DeLoach Vineyards, Littorai Wines

Grower Charlie Heintz's grandparents bought this ridgetop property in Russian River Valley more than a century ago and planted Zinfandel — among other crops — at the site. During Prohibition, they replaced the vines with apple orchards. The family reentered the wine realm in 1982, replacing most of the apple trees with Chardonnay. That turned out to be a pivotal decision; sitting at an elevation of nearly 1,000 feet and caressed by coastal fog as it flows through the vines, the 50-acre Charles Heintz vineyard is considered one of the Sonoma Coast's finest, prized by winemakers for its structured, high-acid Chardonnay.

"We've crafted so many memorable wines from these magical vines since I first set foot in the vineyard way back in 1998. The wines are incredibly distinctive, unlike anything else in Sonoma or California as a whole, and that's down to the special vineyard site itself. High elevation, close to the ocean, long-lingering fog influence, late-season ripening, and precise farming combine to give the fruit striking intensity and style." – Andy Smith, winemaker, DuMOL

Three to Try:

Williams Selyem 2022 Heintz Vineyard Chardonnay, \$68. williamsselyem.com

DuMOL 2021 Charles Heintz Vineyard Isobel Chardonnay, \$89. dumol.com

The Calling 2021 Heintz Vineyard Chardonnay, \$70. thecallingwine.com



Vines planted in 1888 in the 152-acre Bedrock Vineyard in Sonoma Valley. (John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Bedrock Vineyard

Sonoma Valley AVA, 3 miles northwest of Boyes Hot Springs

Zinfandel and “mixed blacks,” including Carignane, Alicante Bouschet, Petite Sirah and more

Producers: Bedrock Wine Co., Robert Biale Vineyards, Reeve Wines

This 152-acre vineyard has a surprising Civil War connection. Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Joseph Hooker founded the site, then known as Madrone Ranch, in 1854 and planted the first vines. Senator George Hearst, father of publisher William Randolph Hearst, replanted the vineyard in the 1880s, and it changed hands many times before winemaker Joel Peterson bought it in 2005 and renamed it Bedrock. Today, Peterson’s son Morgan Twain-Peterson of Bedrock Wine Co. farms the historic site, which recently became the world’s first old-vine vineyard to achieve regenerative and organic certification.

*“Between the site, the age of the vines and farming practices, fruit from Bedrock shows an intensity that is special in the world of old vine Zinfandel. The concentrated flavors of bramble fruits, violet and dried herbs serve as a foundation, along with the notable Bedrock structure, for our wine that really showcases the vineyard’s identity. The concentration and complexity of the fruit we get from Bedrock is rare and something we always enjoy seeing evolve in barrel and bottle.” – **David Natali, winemaker, Robert Biale Vineyards***

Three to Try:

Reeve 2021 Bedrock Vineyard Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon, \$52. reevewines.com

Bedrock Wine Co. 2022 Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon, \$40. bedrockwineco.com

Robert Biale Vineyards 2022 Bedrock Vineyard Zinfandel, \$65. biale.com



Winemaker Morgan Twain-Peterson in his Bedrock Vineyard in the Valley of the Moon where he uses ground cover to attract beneficial insects for his old growth vines. Peterson also produces wines for Bedrock Wine Co. using grapes from Teldeschi Vineyards. (John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Teldeschi Vineyards

Dry Creek Valley AVA, Dry Creek Road, outside Healdsburg

Zinfandel

Producers: Bedrock Wine Co., Once and Future Wine, Carlisle Winery & Vineyards, F. Teldeschi Winery, Del Carlo Winery

Two branches of the Teldeschi family are synonymous with Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, one of Sonoma County's signature varieties. In the 1970s and '80s, Frank and Mike Teldeschi were brothers who shared a driveway but rarely talked. Both brothers and their descendants grow landmark Zinfandel — Ray Teldeschi, son of Mike, now farms four sites in Dry Creek Valley, including his father's historic home ranch, and sells fruit to Carlisle Winery. And John Teldeschi, son of Frank, farms his father's ranch and

has had a decades-long relationship with pioneering winemaker Joel Peterson of Ravenswood (and now Once and Future Wine), who has called the Zinfandel from Teldeschi a wine that “sings of place.”

“Those are vines that are truly farmed the way they have been for 70 or 80 years, and all dry-farmed. They’re the most beautiful head-trained vines you’ll ever see, because it’s literally one generation that trained the next to prune, which is just so rare to see.”
– **Morgan Twain-Peterson, winemaker, Bedrock Wine Co.**

Three to Try:

Bedrock Wine Co. 2021 Teldeschi Ranch Heritage. bedrockwineco.com

Once and Future 2022 Teldeschi Vineyard “Frank’s Block.” onceandfuturewine.com

Carlisle Winery 2021 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, \$58. carlislewinery.com



Kick Ranch Vineyards near Santa Rosa. (Courtesy Bricoleur Vineyards)

Kick Ranch Vineyard

Fountaingrove District AVA, off Calistoga Road outside Santa Rosa

Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Viognier, Zinfandel

Producers: Shared Notes Wine, Ram’s Gate Winery, Tom Eddy Winery, Valette Wines

Sprawled on the western slope of Spring Mountain in the Mayacamas, the 43.5-acre site is relatively young — planted between 2000 and 2002 — but the Fountaingrove AVA is new, too, established in 2015, and is finally earning well-deserved respect for standout terroir and detailed microclimates. This Certified California Sustainable site is revered for its rolling hills of rich, boulder-strewn soils spun from ancient bedrock and volcanics, concentrated in an alluvial fan that all works together to make vines dig deep roots and focus their energy on rich fruit. The site was purchased by Windsor’s Bricoleur Vineyards in 2018. Acclaimed winemaker Bob Cabral, of Williams Selyem and Three Sticks fame, joined the team in 2023.

“The cool, coastal climate is dictated by Pacific winds racing through the nearby Petaluma Gap, with south-facing vine rows attracting optimal sun exposure. Since the estate’s inaugural vintage in 2004, there have been 82 Kick Ranch wines that have received reviews of 90 points or higher from leading critics. We consistently receive waiting list inquiries for Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Grenache in particular.” — **Bob Cabral, winemaker, Bricoleur Vineyards**

Three to Try:

Bricoleur Vineyards 2022 Kick Ranch Sauvignon Blanc, \$36. bricoleurvineyards.com

Shared Notes 2023 Les Leçons des Maîtres Sauvignon Blanc, \$85. sharednoteswine.com

Valette 2022 Kick Ranch Sauvignon Blanc, \$37. valettewines.com



Rossi Ranch, a certified organic vineyard in Kenwood. (Enterprise Vineyards)

Rossi Ranch

Sonoma Valley AVA, Lawndale Rd., Kenwood

Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Zinfandel, Grenache Blanc

Producers: Carlisle Winery & Vineyards, Winery Sixteen 600, Sosie Wines, Loxton Cellars, Dane Cellars, Mayo Family Winery, Jeff Cohn Cellars

Set between two ridges near the back entrance to Trione-Annadel State Park, Rossi Ranch has layered views all the way across the valley to the Mayacamas. The site was originally planted by the Rossi family around 1910 and was farmed by the legendary Val Rossi well into his 80s. Many of the 1910 blocks, including a Zinfandel-forward field blend, were later replanted to Rhône varieties. It's 42 acres of highly prized, hard-to-come-by fruit, and has earned the nickname the "To Kalon of Grenache" from winemaker Tony Biagi. Fun fact: You can see this vineyard up close on public roads. In Kenwood, Lawndale Road bisects the site, about a half-mile west of the junction with Warm Springs Road.

*"The thing that's so beautiful about Rossi is it sits on this uplift of land, and wherever you look, east or west, there's an incredible view. When you walk through the vineyard, you have a real sense of the terroir and the history there — I'll be walking through, just picking up golf-ball-sized pieces of obsidian. It's surrounded by oak forest on all sides, and I think some of that implants into the vineyard, in a slight sense of herbalness in the fruit." — **Bart Hansen, owner and winemaker, Dane Cellars***

Three to Try:

Winery Sixteen 600 2018 Val Rossi Hommage, \$67. winerysixteen600.com

Dane Cellars 2019 Valeria Blend Rossi Ranch, \$60. danecellars.com

Mayo Family Winery 2022 "Josephine's Cuvée" Grenache Blanc Rossi Ranch, \$45. mayofamilywinery.com



Stuhlmuller Vineyards near Healdsburg. (Mack Lucid/Courtesy Stuhlmuller Vineyard)

Stuhlmuller Vineyard

Alexander Valley and Chalk Hill AVA, near Healdsburg

Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Malbec

Producers: Stuhlmuller Vineyards, Silver Oak, Aperture Cellars, Overshine Wine Co., Dutcher Crossing Winery, Mazzocco Sonoma, DeLorimier Winery, Bannister Wines, Williamson Wines

This diverse family-owned vineyard with 155 planted acres is at the cooler, southern end of the Alexander Valley near where it meets the Russian River and Chalk Hill valleys. The site was first planted in the 1980s and for years, the family were growers only, selling their fruit to high-end labels like Silver Oak.

The Stuhlmuller family built a small winery in a historic red barn on the property in the early 2000s, where standout winemaker Leo Steen oversaw winemaking for years. (Steen's protégé, Zac Childers, now heads up the program.) Stuhlmuller's 30-year-old Chardonnay is highly prized as is the 30-year-old hillside Cabernet Sauvignon, some of which is snapped up by Jesse Katz at Aperture.

"I began here as an intern in 2011 — this place just spoke to me. It was definitely where I saw myself; where I wanted to land. My office looks due east towards Mount Saint Helena, and when I'm up on the catwalk above the tanks, I can follow the treeline down to the Russian River and then up towards Fitch Mountain. We've got cattle on the property in the upper hillside, and stands of redwood, Douglas fir, oaks and manzanitas, plus jackrabbits, egrets — a very idyllic setting... One year, we had a bear get into

the top block of Chardonnay. It's a tiny little block and the yields are very low up there with the volcanic soils — but that bear ate really well.” — **Zac Childers, winemaker, Stuhlmuller Vineyards**

Three to Try:

Stuhlmuller Vineyards 2020 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, \$45. stuhlmullervineyards.com

Dutcher Crossing 2021 Stuhlmuller Vineyard Chardonnay, \$45. dutchercrossing.com

Bannister 2018 Chardonnay, \$34. bannisterwines.com



Las Cimas vineyard near Healdsburg. (Courtesy Joshua Harding)

Las Cimas

Russian River Valley AVA, off Westside Road, near Healdsburg

Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Nebbiolo, Grignolino, Ribolla Gialla, Erbaluce, Favorita, Falanghina, Fiano, and more

Producers: Idlewild Wines, Comunità, Arnot-Roberts, Rymer Cellars, Jolie-Laide

Beyond Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, this is a site that showcases the diversity of grape varieties that grow beautifully in Sonoma County and in Russian River Valley. The ranch has undergone a recent transformation under Healdsburg winemaker Sam Bilbro and owner David Drummond, who bought the 500-acre, high-elevation site in 2018. Bilbro and Drummond knew there was a greater purpose to this site and changed over roughly 50 out of the site's 70-plus planted acres to unusual, difficult-to-source Italian varieties — 46 different ones. The site has views that stretch across wide swaths of the county, and the grapes are now grown with organic and regenerative farming practices.

*“From when I first got there, and this was basically a conventionally farmed production vineyard, to now — it’s vibrant, there’s a diverse clover-based cover crop, and every spring there is crimson clover that is just booming, and you see bees buzzing all over the vineyard, you see other insect life, good predatory insect life. The place is just alive now. It’s alive in the soil, it’s alive in the general ecology you can see, and then it’s alive in the diversity of the plantings. It’s all of that at once.” — **Sam Bilbro**, winemaker, **Idlewild Wines, Comunità***

Three to Try:

Idlewild Wines 2023 Freisa Las Cimas Vineyard, \$42. idlewildwines.com

Arnot-Roberts 2023 Falanghina Las Cimas Vineyard. arnotroberts.com

Jolie-Laide 2022 Mondeuse Noire Las Cimas Vineyard, \$42. jolielaidewines.com



Winemaker Matt Duffy checks bud break on Pinot Noir vines in the Bacigalupi Vineyard near Healdsburg, March 28, 2024. (Chad Surmick / The Press Democrat)

Bacigalupi Vineyard

Russian River Valley AVA, on Westside Rd., near Healdsburg

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir

Producers: Williams Selyem, Russian River Vineyards, Vaughn Duffy Wines

The 120-acre homestead Goddard Ranch was established in 1956 by the late Charles Bacigalupi, along with wife Helen. Today, the winery is still run by several generations of the same family and has expanded to several other nearby vineyards, all flourishing with natural tributaries and springs encouraging distinctive cool-climate character. Goddard is most famous for its Chardonnay block that went into the legendary 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay that won the 1976 Judgment of Paris and helped put the California wine industry on the global map. Lesser-known lore is that Charles Bacigalupi coaxed luminary vintner Karl Wentz to give him some French Pinot Noir budwood, one of the first well-documented plantings of the variety in the Russian River Valley.

“Goddard Ranch still boasts some of the original Paris Chardonnay blocks thriving with vines from the 1960s. It’s also home to a massive, ancient oak tree that I love — I visit it when I’m out in the vineyard to admire how beautiful the whole property is.” —

Ashley Herzberg, winemaker, Bacigalupi Vineyards

Three to Try:

Bacigalupi 2022 Goddard Ranch Chardonnay, \$65. bacigalupivineyards.com

Vaughn Duffly 2022 Bacigalupi Vineyards Pinot Noir, \$75. vaughndufflywines.com

Russian River Vineyards 2022 Bacigalupi Vineyards Chardonnay, \$67. russianrivervineyards.com



View of Lake Sonoma near Florence Vineyard in Geyserville. (Courtesy of Jack Florence)



Florence Vineyard near Lake Sonoma. (Jack Florence Jr./Courtesy Florence Vineyard)

Florence Vineyard

Rockpile AVA, near Lake Sonoma

Zinfandel, Petite Sirah

Producers: Florence Vineyard, Rockpile Vineyards, Calafia Cellars, Mazzocco Sonoma, Pezzi King Vineyards, Carol Shelton Wines

On a high ridgetop bordering the far northwest corner of Dry Creek, overlooking the two long arms of Lake Sonoma, is the Rockpile AVA, one of the most unforgiving, out-there places to grow grapes in Sonoma County. Wildfire and drought are constant concerns, as is the nearby presence of the Rodgers Creek fault. In 1994, Jack Florence Jr. planted the first blocks of the now-legendary Rockpile Zin, bringing over budwood from Cloverdale's tiny, hundred-year-old St. Peter's Church Vineyard. His family is one of the pioneers here, along with the Gloeckners of Westphall Ranch, the Park family of Rockpile Vineyards (now owned by Wilson Artisan Wines), and the Mauritsons of Mauritson Wines. At 1,200 feet in elevation, Florence's 12-acre vineyard is a rocky, northward-facing site that yields fruit with intense flavors and a distinct minerality. Florence has sold the fruit for decades and began making his own wine in 2020.

"It's just the sheer ruggedness of it, the closeness with nature. It's quiet enough that you really feel like you're in another world. So much of Sonoma County is close into towns now, but this is one of those places that is still way out there. The way the fog rolls in over the hills and comes up from Lake Sonoma, gives that surreal feel to it and puts you at one with nature." – **Jack Florence Jr., Florence Vineyard**

Three to Try:

Rockpile Vineyards 2021 Florence Zinfandel, \$63. rockpilevineyards.com

Florence Vineyard 2021 Rockpile Petite Sirah, \$60. florencevineyard.com

Mazzocco Sonoma 2021 Rockpile Florence Reserve Zinfandel, \$65. mazzocco.com



Autumn leaves of pinot noir grape vines at Terra de Promissio vineyard on South Ely Road in Petaluma, Monday, Nov. 6, 2023. (Beth Schlanker / The Press Democrat)

Terra de Promissio

Petaluma Gap AVA, about 4 miles east of downtown Petaluma

Pinot Noir

Producers: Williams Selyem, The Calling, Gary Farrell Winery

Gently rolling hills overlook the Petaluma River, spanning 50 acres kissed by wind and fog flowing from the Sonoma Coast and San Pablo Bay. As the name says, this is “the land of promise.” The first 32 acres were planted in 2002, with every row farmed as it is today, customized to each client winemaker’s meticulous instructions. The property’s Dijon clones produce smaller berries and clusters, but that’s what makes the fruit so coveted for its concentrated flavors and mischievous nature that ambitious winemakers love to pamper. Terra de Promissio’s own wines are so valued that they are allocated almost exclusively to its members.

*“We get just 5 tons from two blocks from this gem of a property, but I love its ideal terroir for its balance of earth and fruit characteristics. The soil, sun exposure, hill elevation, vine density, and the wind and fog of the Petaluma Gap all contribute to the grapes developing a slow maturation and extended hang time. This results in intensely flavored grapes and a chemistry for age-worthy wines.” – **James MacPhail, winemaker, The Calling***

Three to Try:

The Calling 2021 Terra de Promissio Pinot Noir, \$80. thecallingwine.com

Gary Farrell 2019 Terra de Promissio Pinot Noir, \$90. garyfarrellwinery.com

Williams Selyem 2022 Terra de Promissio Pinot Noir, \$78. williamsselyem.com



Winemaker Max Reichwage, who uses grapes from the Mancini Ranch vineyard to produce a white wine. (Eileen Roche/for Sonoma Magazine)

Mancini Ranch

Russian River Valley AVA, near the corner of Olivet & Piner roads in Santa Rosa

Zinfandel, Carignane, mixed field blend

Producers: Ridge Vineyards, Carlisle Winery & Vineyards, Reichwage Winery

The historic 16-acre vineyard is a very rare, dry-farmed field blend of some 21 varieties, planted between 1922 and 1924 by Italian immigrant Luca Mancini amid still-existing ancient oak, walnut, apple, pear and plum trees. While lots of Zin and a good amount of Carignane dominate, the site is a wonderland of so many obscure grapes that it becomes a magical adventure exploring them all. Abouriou, Blauer Portugeiser and Elbling are just a few of the delights. In 2018, current vineyard owner Max Reichwage grafted even more marvels like Mondeuse, Plavac Mali and Clairette Blanche. Reichwage is working diligently to restore the previously neglected property's soil and vine health, honoring a truly unique salute to Sonoma County's winemaking roots.

*"The old vines tend to produce very little fruit (about 1 ton per acre) and are very fragile — many of the trunks would topple over if we didn't manage them so carefully. But I bought this vineyard to satisfy my own curiosity about the plantings, and also as a way to evaluate more heat-tolerant varieties due to our warming climate and drought. There is even one unknown variety of teinturier (rare, red-flesh grapes) that UC Davis does not have in their DNA database, so I jokingly refer to it as 'Mancini Bouschet.'" — **Max Reichwage, winemaker, Reichwage Winery***

Three to Try:

Ridge Vineyards 2022 Mancini Ranch Blend, \$42. [ridgewine.com](https://www.ridgewine.com)

Carlisle 2022 Mancini Ranch Zinfandel, \$56. [carlislewinery.com](https://www.carlislewinery.com)

Reichwage Winery 2021 Mancini Ranch White Wine, \$35. [reichwage.com](https://www.reichwage.com)



Sunrise on a winter morning at J. Rochioli Vineyards & Winery in Healdsburg. (Kim Carroll)

Rochioli Vineyard

Russian River Valley AVA, on Westside Road, near Healdsburg

Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah

Producers: J. Rochioli Vineyard & Winery, Gary Farrell Winery, Ramey Wine Cellars, Williams Selyem, Castalia Wines, Holdredge Wines, Longboard Vineyards

When **visionary winegrower Joe Rochioli Jr. died in 2022** at the age of 88, his obituary noted that he was survived by his family — and the 900,000 vines he lovingly cared for on his family’s ranch. Rochioli Jr. was considered the founding father of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Back in 1968, he was likely the first to plant Pinot Noir in the valley, and his son, Tom Rochioli, and grandchildren still oversee the family’s 130 planted acres today. Rochioli was also one of the first to divide their plantings into blocks based on terroir and to make wines separately from those blocks. In addition to the classic Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Rochioli is known for some of the oldest plantings of Sauvignon Blanc in the state.

*“When I walk through those old vineyards, I do think about the past... I remember my grandfather walking through the Sauvignon Blanc vineyard right before he died, looking at those massive vines. If you knew my father — I think I’m much like him. Especially when I was a young guy, finding my way, doing the work, really seeing every vine over and over — you get to know them. You see a plant that was trained a certain way, or grew a certain way, and you recognize it. You get to know their growth patterns. It just really gets in your blood. I think when you love what you do so much, that is all a part of it.” — **Tom Rochioli, winemaker, J. Rochioli Vineyard & Winery***

Three to Try:

J. Rochioli Vineyard & Winery 2022 Estate Pinot Noir, \$72. rochioliwinery.com

Gary Farrell Winery 2020 Rochioli Vineyard Pinot Noir, \$90. garyfarrell.com

Longboard Vineyards 2023 Rochioli Vineyard Chardonnay, \$56. longboardvineyards.com



Paul Bernier and his dry farmed grapes. (Chris Hardy / Sonoma Magazine)

Bernier Zinyard

Dry Creek Valley AVA, off Canyon Road, just west of Geyserville

Zinfandel, Petite Sirah

Producers: Peterson Winery, Dutcher Crossing Winery, Quivira Vineyards, Sbragia Family Vineyards

Zinfandel isn't the only crop that Bernier Farms grows on the rugged, dusty hillsides of the Dry Creek and Alexander valleys — the Bernier family also cultivates 14 varieties of garlic — but it's definitely the most celebrated. Founding grower Paul Bernier learned the secrets of dry farming grapes in the 1970s from "old Italians" who came before him and built a reputation for producing great Zinfandel on marginal land. With help from his son Zureal, Bernier planted Zinfandel on the family's home ranch in the early 1990s and added Petite Sirah in 2003. The resulting Bernier Zinyard, covering just 2.5 acres and entirely dry-farmed, is the family's longest-running vineyard designate and a winemaker favorite.

*“The soil on their hillside is unique, with a nice mix of sand and loam. The Berniers practice dry-farming, organic composting and use cover crops, all of which make for strongly established but balanced vines. The resulting grapes and wine are always tasty and picked at a lower sugar (content) than many other Zin vineyards to retain their acid and sugar balance. The wine usually finishes in the low 13 percents [in ABV] and has a more delicate, perfumed character than darker, jammier Zinfandels.” – **Jamie Peterson, winemaker and general manager, Peterson Winery***

Three to Try:

Peterson Winery 2019 Bernier Zinyard Zinfandel, \$36. petersonwinery.com

Dutcher Crossing 2019 Bernier-Sibary Vineyard Zinfandel, \$52. dutchercrossingwinery.com

Quivira Vineyards 2018 Pillsbury Vineyard Zinfandel, \$50. quivirawine.com

How We Chose

Our team of three worked in collaboration to research this list, speaking with growers, winemakers, wine retailers and sommeliers to arrive at a list of notable vineyards. The goal is to represent some of the best of Sonoma across different regions and varieties, recognizing both historic sites and newer ones. We felt one of the more interesting aspects of the research was found in comparing different wines from the same location — so we focused on places that sell their fruit to multiple producers.

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