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CALIFORNIA WINE: LIQUID GOLD

Wine is grown throughout California today in 48 of the state's 58 counties. From its southernmost San Diego border to the Trinity Alps in the far north, California produces wine styles for every palate. It's all possible due to the infinite variety of soils and climates found within the state's 108 federally recognized American Viticultural Areas and other appellations. Within these distinctive regions, some 110 winegrape varieties grow in California.

There are more than 2,800 wineries, composed primarily of family-owned operations, many of which are multigenerational businesses dedicated to producing high quality wines through sustainable practices. With its natural beauty, ideal growing conditions, diversity of wines produced, commitment to protecting the environment and passionate people, California is the earth's most perfect place to not only make wine, but to enjoy it.

WINES OF CALIFORNIA

The characteristic that most distinguishes one wine from another is the type of grape—or variety—from which it is produced. When ripened to maturity, each variety contributes its own unique aromas and flavors—or varietal character—to the wine. Climate and soil, as well as specific viticultural (grapegrowing) and winemaking practices, greatly influence the final complexion of the wine. But a basic familiarity with the principal grape varieties is invaluable when seeking out wines you will enjoy.

White Wines

There are many styles to choose from among white wines. While some are aged in oak, most stay out of wood to preserve their freshness and varietal character. White wines can range in style from bone dry to sweet.

- **CHARDONNAY** (*shar-doh-nay*). Chardonnay is the most widely planted variety in the state covering about 95,000 acres. It is a dry wine with an appealing balance of fruit, acidity and texture. Winemakers play an important role in the style of Chardonnay which can range from clean and crisp with a hint of varietal flavor to rich and complex oak-aged wines.
- **SAUVIGNON BLANC** (*so-vee-n'yohn blanc or blahn*). As one of the most successful quality white wines produced in California, Sauvignon Blanc (also known as Fumé Blanc) is best known for its grassy, herbal flavors and is very popular with fish and shellfish.
- **CHENIN BLANC** (*sheh-nan blanc or blahn*). This variety has been thriving in California for more than a century and is known for its ability to grow in warmer climates and produce light, well-balanced wines. It has fresh, delicate floral characteristics and is made in dry to off-dry (slightly sweet) style.
- **PINOT GRIGIO** (*pee-no gree-gee-oh*) As a wine rising in popularity, Pinot Grigio offers a light-bodied wine that is crisp and lean and a suitable match with a wide variety of foods.
- **VOIGNIER** (*vee-oh-n'yay*) The Viognier grape can produce a wine with powerful fruit and floral aromas and full-flavored taste. Winemakers who have billed themselves as the Rhone Rangers have sparked interest in Rhone varietals such as Viognier.
- **RIESLING** (*rees-ling*). These wines are floral, with fruity-yet-delicate aromas and flavors.

Riesling is made in every style from dry to concentrated sweet wines.

- **GEWÜRZTRAMINER** (*geh-vertz-tra-mee-ner*). Gewürztraminer produces distinctive wines rich in spicy aromas and full flavors. With styles that range from dry to sweet, this varietal is a popular choice for Asian cuisine and highly spiced dishes.
- **OTHER VARIETALS INCLUDE:** French Colombard, Marsanne, Muscat, Roussanne and Semillon as well as blends of one or more white grape varieties.

Red Wines

Red wines are usually dry and have some tannic astringency (a rough, puckery sensation in the mouth). Aged in wood for depth and complexity, or produced in light fruity styles, red wines gain their color when the clear juice of freshly crushed grapes is held with the color-laden skins of red winegrapes after crushing. The pigments of the skins are imparted to the juice during this portion of the winemaking process.

- **CABERNET SAUVIGNON** (*cab-air-nay so-vee-n'yohn*). One of the great winegrapes of the world, Cabernet Sauvignon is prized for its depth of flavor and aroma and its ability to age (often 10 to 30 years). It is a full-bodied, rich, intense wine with cherry-currant, sometimes herbal flavors and noticeable tannins. California vintners often blend Cabernet with other red varieties, such as Merlot and Cabernet Franc, to soften its astringency.
- **MERLOT** (*mair-lo*). Long prized as a partner in blending with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot has become a popular varietal wine in its own right in California. Merlot is a medium- to full-bodied red with herbaceous flavors and velvety round mouth feel. Softer than Cabernet, Merlot usually requires less aging to reach full potential.
- **SYRAH** (*see-rah*). Although Syrah has been cultivated in California for a century, it's relatively new to most Americans, who have come to embrace it for its lush, ripe blackberry, cassis, black pepper and meaty flavors. Called Shiraz in Australia, Syrah can be rich, bold and spicy when grown in warmer regions; from cooler sites, it has a vibrant fruitiness and an elegant, structured frame. When blended with its Rhone varietal cousins Grenache, Mourvedre, Cinsault and other grapes, Syrah takes on a multi-dimensional personality.
- **PINOT NOIR** (*pee-no n'wahr*). Recognized as one of the most challenging winegrapes to bring to full potential, Pinot Noir makes a light- to medium-bodied red that is delicate, smooth and rich in complexity, with berry aromas, a silky ethereal texture and great compatibility with food.
- **ZINFANDEL** (*zin-fin-del*). Its origins a mystery for most of its 140-year history in California, Zinfandel is now thought to have originated in one of the islands of Croatia. Zinfandel is one of the most widely planted red winegrapes in the state covering 52,000 acres. It produces a light-, medium- and full-bodied wine rich in berry-like—sometimes spicy—flavors. It is also widely used in the popular, off-dry blush wine known as White Zinfandel.
- **OTHER RED VARIETALS INCLUDE:** Cabernet Franc, Carignane, Grenache, Malbec, Mourvedre, Petite Sirah, Petit Verdot, Sangiovese as well as blends of one or more red grape varieties.

Rose and Blush Wines

Wine lovers are embracing California rosés, which tend to be dry yet fresh and fruity. White Zinfandel and White Grenache remain big sellers in America, due to their light and slightly sweet, easy-to-drink personality.

Sparkling Wine/Champagne

No longer just celebratory beverages, California sparkling wine and champagne have found a place at the table, where their effervescence and crisp acidity match so well with salty and fried dishes, shellfish, Asian cuisine and a wide range of cheeses.

Dessert Wines

California dessert wines, also called “late-harvest,” are made from a number of grape varieties, including Gewurztraminer, Muscat, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Zinfandel. These sweet wines deliver loads of unctuous flavor and just enough acidity to remain refreshing.

CALIFORNIA WINE REGIONS

As California’s wine industry grows and exciting new growing regions emerge, the need becomes greater for defining and naming these areas to help consumers know the source of the grapes in each bottle. For this purpose, the U.S. Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) approves all wine label information which includes the appellation of origin or geographic source of the grapes. Appellations of origin are areas defined by either political boundaries such as county, state or country names, or delimited grapegrowing areas known as American Viticultural Areas, or AVAs, that are distinguishable by their geographic, climatic and historic features.

The TTB also approves requests for the establishment of American Viticultural Areas. As of June 2009, there were 108 AVAs in California with Cole Ranch in Mendocino County the smallest (188 acres) and the Central Coast the largest, at nearly 6.8 million acres. For a wine to carry an AVA name on its label, at least 85% of the grapes must be grown in that AVA.

A Santa Lucia Highlands-labeled Pinot Noir, for example, must contain a minimum of 85% Santa Lucia Highlands fruit; the remainder can be from elsewhere in California. A wine with 60% Santa Lucia Highlands grapes and 40% from Arroyo Seco, another AVA, can carry the Monterey AVA on its label, because it didn’t meet the 85% requirement for Santa Lucia Highlands or Arroyo Seco, both of which are within the Monterey AVA.

In addition to AVAs, Appellations defined by the names of county, state and country political boundaries can be used on labels. For example, counties such as Sonoma County and Santa Barbara County are political appellations, not AVAs, although they have several AVAs within their boundaries. A wine bearing the “California” appellation ensures consumers that 100% of the grapes were grown in California.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST REGION

This large region includes the North Coast American Viticultural Area (AVA), comprising Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake counties, and portions of Marin and Solano counties. At approximately 100 miles long and 50 miles wide, this winemaking mecca is home to nearly half of the total number of wineries in the state. The Northern California region is a landscape of rugged coastline, ancient redwoods, native oaks, carpets of vines on hillsides and valley floors, and the Russian River, which flows from the coastal mountains in Mendocino County into northern Sonoma County, where it turns west near Healdsburg and heads to the Pacific Ocean.

NAPA COUNTY: At more than 400,000 acres, with about 46,000 acres planted to vines, the Napa Valley AVA encompasses nearly all of the county of Napa and includes 14 AVAs. While Napa Valley produces only 4 percent of California’s wine, it’s the state’s most famous wine region, best known for its powerful Cabernet Sauvignons, and also for Merlot and Chardonnay. Yet Napa Valley is as diverse as any AVA in the state, also producing Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Zinfandel.

Napa Valley is bordered by the Vaca mountains on the east and the Mayacamas range on the west, a boundary it shares with Sonoma County. Vineyard elevations range from 250 to 2,500 feet, and temperatures can vary by 10 degrees between Napa to the south and Calistoga in the warmer north.

Napa Valley’s most recognized AVAs include Howell Mountain, Los Carneros, Oakville, Rutherford, St. Helena, Spring Mountain District, Stags Leap District and Yountville.

SONOMA COUNTY: A widely diverse range of topography, soils and microclimates exists in Sonoma County, which encompasses more than 1 million acres, some 60,000 of them in vines. Chardonnay is the most-planted grape, with Cabernet Sauvignon not far behind. Sonoma County shares its eastern border with Napa Valley and its northern boundary with Mendocino County. Its warm interior valleys excel at Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Zinfandel; the cooler regions near San Pablo Bay, the Russian River and the Sonoma

coast, produce acclaimed Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. There are AVAs within Sonoma County, among them Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley, Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Knights Valley, Los Carneros, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast and Sonoma Valley.

LOS CARNEROS: This 37,000-acre AVA is unusual in that it straddles two counties, Napa and Sonoma, some 40 miles north of San Francisco. Carneros (“sheep” in Spanish) is a land of rolling hills that host grapevines, sheep and cattle. Breezes and fog from nearby San Pablo Bay and the Pacific Ocean create a long, cool growing region that favors Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and sparkling wine grapes.

MENDOCINO COUNTY: Located directly north of Sonoma County, Mendocino is bounded by the Coastal Mountain Range, the Pacific Ocean and the redwood forests that blanket about 60% of the county. Wine grapes are grown in valleys and along ridge tops, with Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir well-suited to the cool Anderson Valley and Potter Valley, and rich, spicy, old-vine Petite Sirahs, Syrahs and Zinfandels in the warmer Redwood and McDowell valleys.

LAKE COUNTY: Clear Lake, the largest natural lake entirely within California, is the focal point for this region, in which vineyards are planted at 1,300 to 2,000 feet in elevation, within sight of the dormant volcano Mt. Konocti. These elevations provide a later start to the growing season, and summer conditions are suitably warm to ripen the grapes. Cabernet Sauvignon is the most-planted variety, followed by Sauvignon Blanc.

MARIN AND SOLANO COUNTIES: A small yet emerging wine region, Marin County is flanked by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay (the northeastern half is within the North Coast AVA).

Pinot Noir is the star grape, taking kindly to the marine-cooled conditions. A small portion of Solano County is within the North Coast AVA and benefits from cool ocean breezes flowing through the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento Delta.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST REGIONS

This region begins at San Francisco Bay, encompasses Livermore to the east, and runs down the California Coast to Santa Barbara along Highway 101, which Franciscan monks called El Camino Real, “the royal road. The Central Coast American Viticultural Area (AVA) hugs 250 miles of coastline, encompassing some 6.8 million acres, of which nearly 100,000 are planted to vines that produce approximately 5% of the state’s wine grapes.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY: This sprawling sub-appellation within the Central Coast AVA includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties and approximately 1.4 million acres. Chardonnay is the No.1 planted variety, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Syrah and Petite Sirah also show great promise in this region that’s cooled at night by San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

LIVERMORE VALLEY: This 237,000-acre region in Alameda County (and within the San Francisco Bay AVA) was one of the first AVAs established in California, in 1982. Wine grapes have grown here since the 1840s and today, Petite Sirah and Sauvignon Blanc are among Livermore’s most successful varieties.

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS: One of California’s first AVAs, the Santa Cruz Mountains region was approved in 1981, based on its mountainous elevations, thin, stony soils and cool growing conditions influenced by the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay. The 408,000-acre AVA reaches into portions of San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties and produces fine Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

MONTEREY COUNTY: Known for the rugged beauty of Big Sur and the charm of Carmel, Monterey is also home to more than 40,000 acres of wine grapes and nine AVAs: Arroyo Seco, Carmel

Valley, Chalona, Hames Valley, Monterey, San Antonio Valley, San Bernabe, San Lucas and Santa Lucia Highlands. Chardonnay and Merlot have long been important here, and Pinot Noir and Syrah are promising. The climate reflects the cooling influence of Monterey Bay. There are enough warm days to ripen the grapes, with stiff marine breezes. Due to the cool conditions, harvest is typically two weeks later than in other regions, allowing for a long season and slow fruit maturation. San Benito County, east of Monterey County, includes the Cienega Valley, Lime Kiln Valley, Mt. Harlan, Paicines and San Benito AVAs, where elevations range from sea level to 5,000 feet, and Pinot Noir and Syrah perform beautifully.

PASO ROBLES AND SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY: The city of Paso Robles, situated 20 miles west of the Pacific Ocean, is in San Luis Obispo County, halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Paso Robles AVA within San Luis Obispo County is warm by day, cool by night, and blessed with a limestone soil component that adds structure and minerality to Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Zinfandel. Farther south, the Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande AVAs—closer to the ocean and cooler than Paso Robles—are well-suited to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY:

California's north-south coastal range of mountains turns to east-west orientations here, allowing fog and ocean breezes to flood into vineyards in the Santa Rita Hills, Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Maria Valley AVAs. This makes for a cool climate, yet plentiful afternoon sun ripens Chardonnay, Riesling and Pinot Noir to perfection. On warmer sites, Syrah can be excellent.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION

The Southern California region extends from Malibu, north of the city of Los Angeles, to the southern border of California below the city of San Diego. While the area is known for its beaches, entertainment industry and celebrity sightings, California's winemaking history began here, in 1769, when Father Junipero Serra planted grapes at Mission San Diego de Alcala and made wine. Commercial winemaking boomed in Southern California in the early 1900s, until Prohibition and development forced the closure of many wineries and the removal of vines. Yet winemaking still thrives in small pockets of Southern California, in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego—all contained within the 2.14 -million-acre South Coast AVA. There are approximately 50 wineries in the Southern California region, which includes the AVAs of Temecula Valley, Cucamonga Valley, Ramona Valley, San Pasqual Valley, Saddle Rock-Malibu and Malibu-Newton Canyon. Generally, breezes from the Pacific Ocean moderate the warmth of sunny Southern California, and the climate is conducive to growing a wide range of grape types, including the classic Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon varieties, and "new-wave" Rhone, Italian and Spanish varieties.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY: Father Serra's 1769 planting of wine grapes at Mission San Diego de Alcala (in what is now the city of San Diego) was the first of many vineyards to be developed within the chain of Spanish missions throughout California. A few vestiges of the original Mission grape remain, yet in the San Diego County AVAs of Ramona Valley and San Pasqual Valley, vitis vinifera varieties such as Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc prevail, along with Mediterranean grapes.

TEMECULA VALLEY: This AVA is located in Riverside County, about an hour's drive northeast of San Diego. Winemaking began in Temecula Valley in the late 700s, and while development has crept closer to the vineyards, winemaking here shows no signs of slowing down.

Fog often lingers until mid-morning on the 1,400- foot- high plateau between mountain peaks, replenishing vines in this dry, low-rainfall zone. Traditionally a producer of Chardonnay, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc, Temecula has replanted much of its vineyard acreage to Mediterranean grapes such as Syrah, Grenache, Viognier and Tempranillo.

CUCAMONGA VALLEY: Famous for its old-vine Zinfandels and port- style wines, Cucamonga Valley overlaps San Bernardino and Riverside counties, near Ontario and Rancho Cucamonga. At approximately 137,000 acres, the AVA has a winemaking legacy going back to the early 1900s, and while development eliminated many vineyards, the winemaking tradition continues.

FACTS & STATS

- California is the No. 4 wine producer in the world, after the countries of Italy, France and Spain.
- By 2010, if not sooner, the United States is expected to become the No.1 wine market in the world.
- California produces approximately 90% of all wine made in America, and two-thirds of all wine sold in the U.S.
- In 2008, there were 2,800 bonded wineries and 4,600 wine grapegrowers in the state.
- The California wine industry has an economic impact of more than \$58.9 billion on the state's economy.
- More than 20 million people visited California wine country in 2008.
- One barrel of wine equals approximately 20 (12-bottle) cases and 1,200 glasses.
- One ton of grapes makes about 720 bottles of wine, or 60 cases.
- One vine produces between four and six bottles of wine.
- Approximately 2.8 pounds of grapes are used to make one bottle of wine.

REGIONAL WINE ORGANIZATIONS

- Amador Vintners Association: (209) 245- 6992, www.amadorwine.com
- Calaveras Winegrape Alliance: (209) 728-9467, www.calaveraswines.org
- Carneros Wine Alliance: (707) 253 -2678, www.carneros.com
- Clarksburg Winegrowers Association: (916) 448-7282, www.clarksburgwinegrowers.com
- El Dorado Winery Association: (800) 306 - 3956 , www.eldoradowines.org
- Lake County Winegrape Commission: (707) 995- 3421, www.lakecountywinegrape.org
- Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association: (925) 447-9463 , www.livermorewine.com
- Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission: (209) 367- 4727, www.lodiwine.com
- Madera Vintners Association: www.maderavintners.com
- Mendocino Winegrape and Wine Commission: (707) 468-9886 , www.mendowine.com
- Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association: (830) 375-9400, www.montereywines.org
- Napa Valley Vintners: (707) 963 - 3388, www.napavintners.com
- Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance: (805) 239-8463 , www.pasowine.com
- San Diego County Vintners Association: (760) 782-2787, www.sandiegowineries.org
- San Luis Obispo Vintners and Growers Association: (805) 541 -5868, www.slowine.com
- Santa Barbara County Vintners Association: (805) 688-0881 , www.sbcountywines.com
- Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association: (831) 685-8463 , www.scmwa.com
- Sonoma County Vintners: (707) 522-5840, www.sonomawine.com
- Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance: (707) 935-0803 , www.sonomavalleywine.com
- Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association: (951) 699 - 6586, www.temeculawines.org

Established in 1934, the California Wine Institute is the public policy advocacy group of over 1,000 California wineries and affiliated businesses that initiate and advocate state, federal and international public policy to enhance environment for the responsible production, consumption and enjoyment of wine. The organization also works to enhance the economic and environmental health of its communities and the state through its leadership in sustainable winegrowing and winemaking practices and a partnership with California Travel and Tourism Commission to showcase California's wine and food offering. The Wine Institute membership represents 85 percent of U.S. wine production and 95 percent of U.S. wine exports. For more information visit www.wineinstitute.org or www.discovercaliforniawine.com.