www.landofwineandfood.com

CULINARY ITINERARY: INLAND EMPIRE/ TEMECULA VALLEY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY

Formerly part of Los Angeles County and on historic Route 66, the Inland Empire is all Southern California. You'll find agriculture and viticulture: a premier wine region, in fact. Enjoy that signature warm, dry climate while you explore the region's cities or its network of small towns. Find summer fun at Big Bear Lake, winter sports in the San Jacinto Mountains, or get away from it all in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Day One: San Bernardino/Rancho Cucamonga/Riverside

Stop off in San Bernardino to visit the **California Welcome Center** (www.visitcwc.com/destinations/sanbernardino/index.php) for wine country brochures and maps to help get you started. If you're looking for something sweet to start the day, visit **Noyes Bakery** (909-883-0616), where sugary cookies and delicate pastries fill the glass cases and beckon to customers as they have for generations. Regulars still come in to purchase the almond-and-honey beehive pastries and buttermilk teacakes that have remained two of the bakery's most popular items since it opened 83 years ago.

Work off your breakfast by perusing various museums in San Bernardino, or taking advantage of various outdoor recreation activities in the Mediterranean climate. If you decide to stay for the day, a restaurant not to be missed is **Les Rendezvous (**909-883-1231), featuring some of the best French cuisine in Southern California.

If you're a grape junkie, however, the temptation of wine country may be too great to ignore. If so, pack a picnic lunch and spend the afternoon exploring the Cucamonga Valley, known for dry farming methods that began in this area at the turn of the 20th Century. Many "old-vine" varieties such as Zinfandel, Grenache, Mourvedre, Sangiovese and Alicante flourish here. **The Wine Tailor** (www.thewinetailor.com) is located on the site of **Thomas Winery**, the oldest winery in California. The Wine Tailor is the sole area winery where visitors can make and label their own wine, ending up with a private and personal vintage. The Wine Tailor also hosts their famed Chocolate Decadence event several times a year, giving visitors the opportunity to taste featured wines paired with the a variety of chocolates. The Wine Tailor has also recently introduced Fruit Wine Friday, where every fruit wine is available for tasting. The **Joseph Filippi Winery & Vineyards** (www.josephfilippiwinery.com), which has won more than 200 awards for winemaking excellence over the past 35 years, offers tasting and meeting rooms for guests. The **Galleano Winery** (www.galleanowinery.com) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been producing award-winning wines since 1933.

If you prefer an afternoon on the wild side, head to Big Bear Lake, a resort area about an hour northeast of San Bernardino. The resort area is open year-round but it's especially famous as a winter playground with plenty of amenities and attractions for California adventure, including downhill skiing, snowboarding,

snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, inner tubing, horseback riding and off-road excursions. A great place to stop for dinner is **Big Bear Mountain Brewery** (909-866-2337), featuring unique ales, and just about every conceivable kind of sandwich, from grilled one-third pound burgers to deli delights. Piping hot soup and tangy chili are always available, and the nachos are a hit, with a mountain of chips snowcapped with melted cheese.

Before perhaps enjoying a performance at the acclaimed Sturges Center for the Performing Arts in San Bernardino, you'll want to have dinner at one of the region's favorites. **Farm Artisan Foods** (www.farmartisanfoods.com) restaurant owner Roberto Argentina wows diners in nearby Redlands (about 20 minutes southeast of San Bernardino) with the freshest local ingredients cooked with artisan principles. He uses eggs from the nearby **Norco Ranch** (www.norcoeggs.com), vegetables and herbs from his own garden and Mitchell Herbs in San Mateo Canyon, Helser Farms for fresh tomatoes and cucumbers, and wines from Temecula Valley. **Castaway** (www.thecastawaysb.com/) is one of the area's more romantic establishments, earning high marks from critics and casual diners for its upscale setting, sweeping hillside views, and eclectic American menu. The enchanting setting is sure to impress, whether you opt for the white-linen scene inside or the beautiful garden patio outside. Reservations are strongly encouraged, and banquet facilities are available. Hilton San Bernardino eatery **The Manhattan Grill** (909-889-0133) features a California-only wine list and mouth-watering dishes such as juicy Angus Beef, mouthwatering seafood and comfort dishes such as 5-cheese macaroni with a crunchy topping and fluffy mashed potatoes with asiago cheese and fresh sage. When it's nice out, outdoor seating on the tree-lined patio is available as well.

Another option for dinner is to head about 20 minutes southwest to **Mario's Place** (www.mariosplace.com) in Riverside. Across from Riverside's famed Mission Inn, Mario's Place has carved out a spot at the upper echelon of the Inland Empire dining scene. The vibe is New York supper club meets California casual. The finely tuned menu, focusing on the cuisines of southern France and Tuscany, features pastas made fresh daily, thin-crust pizzas, risottos, grilled fish, and steaks and chops. Many of Mario's touches, such as infused olive oils, hearty wine reduction sauces, and delicately styled plate presentations, demonstrate the love and attention lavished by the three Palagi brothers on the family's restaurant.

Another 15 minutes southwest from Riverside takes you to another hotspot, **Zip Fusion** (www.Zipfusion.com/corona), in Corona. A spin-off of Jason Ha's successful Los Angeles venture, this place has definitely created a buzz. Packed with flirting hipsters between its organic wood walls, Fusion features an innovative Japanese and Korean menu that caters to both adventuresome palates (jalapeños stuffed with tuna and cream cheese) and standard tastes (sushi and sashimi, grilled chicken salad). With its mod crowd and pulsating world-music techno beat, you may think you're in L.A., not the Inland Empire.

For more information on San Bernardino, visit www.san-bernardino.org. For Big Bear details, visit www.bigbear.com. For Lake Arrowhead information, visit www.lakearrowhead.net.

Day Two: Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country

In the rolling hills of southwestern Riverside County lies California's southernmost wine region, Temecula Valley, just an hour from San Diego and 90 minutes from Los Angeles. Many are startled to learn that one of the state's finest wine regions is so near the desert, with its scorching heat. But vintners here are proving that the combination of cool nights, proximity to the Pacific Ocean breezes, and 1,500-foot elevation can produce sophisticated warm-climate reds, plus excellent examples of reds and whites typically grown farther north. Wine country visitors are also learning that Temecula Valley supports a whole range of options in addition to wine tasting, such as great restaurants, golf courses, casino entertainment, spas and concerts.

In the morning, work up an appetite for wine by visiting the **Temecula Olive Oil Company** (www.temeculaoliveoil.com) in Old Town Temecula. This family-owned and operated business takes great pride in every product it produces sustainably at its groves, oils are hand-blended by the International Olive Oil Council-certified Master Taster. The result is a true extra virgin olive oil, always 100 percent extra virgin, always 100% California olive oil. They have a tasting bar where you can sample the olive oils and balsamic vinegars before you buy. Or if you're more wild about dairy, the **Winchester Cheese Company** (www.winchestercheese.com) makes fine award-winning Gouda cheese on their farm in Winchester, about 20 miles northeast of Temecula. They create their cheese in the same natural way the Wesselink family has for generations in Holland, using the same natural ingredients and fresh raw milk. Then they age the cheese like fine wine, to perfection, to bring out its natural goodness.

If you'd prefer to stay in Old Town, the **Temecula Valley Cheese Company** (www.tvcheese.com) sells handcrafted, artisan cheeses produced for quality, not quantity. For some people cheese is just a food. For owners Jeff and Shawna Smoot, cheese is an art and is as complex as its fermented friend, wine. There are many wineries to enjoy in Temecula Valley, but a great one to start at is the **Briar Rose Winery,** www.briarrosewinery.com, the first reservation-only boutique vineyard run by a family dedicated to producing limited production wines made from the most intensely flavored grapes from their lush vineyards or **Bella Vista Winery (**www.**bellavistawinery.com**), the first commercial vineyard in Temecula Valley, open seven days a week and known for their friendly staff who put visitors at ease. Notable wineries include **Baily Vineyard & Winery** (www.bailywinery.com), **Palumbo Family Vineyards & Winery** (www.palumbofamilyvineyards.com) and **Maurice Carrie Winery** (www.mauricecarriewinery.com).

To finish the afternoon, head over to **Thornton Winery** (www.thorntonwine.com), which has won many awards for its Cabernet-Merlot, Cabernet-Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Syrah and more. Enjoy their tasting room or sign up for special events like blending parties. For the quintessential Temecula Valley experience, make reservations for dinner at the award-winning **Café Champagne at Thornton Winery**. Since 1988, the café management has made every effort to offer the perfect combination of French country elegance and award-winning contemporary cuisine, including growing their own herbs and flowers. The restaurant provides ongoing events, such as the annual Thornton Winery Champagne Jazz Series, which provides a stellar lineup of nationally renowned contemporary jazz artists every spring, summer and fall. Thornton Winery continues to build on its national and critically acclaimed reputation as one of the finest outdoor venues. The intimate and acoustically superb Mediterranean fountain terrace overlooks the beautiful Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country.

Want to play, sip and stay? Another option is **South Coast Winery Resort & Spa**, Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country'sonly full service luxury resort, featuring the renowned Vineyard Rose Restaurant, accommodations in its private villas, and numerous award-winning wines in its tasting room. The winery recently received the Golden Bear Winery trophy during the California State Fair Commercial Wine Competition for fielding the greatest number of award-winning wines in the 2008 annual fair competition. The 15000-square-foot GrapeSeed Spa, a Tuscan-style treasure, is tucked away in the rustic vineyards. GrapeSeed offers everything from half and full day packages to unique classes like *Vino-Vinyasa*, a "group therapy" yoga and wine tasting session featuring six specially selected wines for a blissful "Wine and Unwind" experience.

If you prefer to get physical in the afternoon instead of winery hopping, drive just over an hour northeast of Temecula Valley to Idyllwild, nestled in the San Jacinto Mountains. Set among tall pines, sweet smelling cedars and legendary rocks, Idyllwild has kept its small-town charm with many locally owned shops and restaurants to enjoy. Hiking and rock climbing are among the most popular pastimes here, with many boulders and the

legendary Tahquitz and Suicide Rocks, For dinner, don't miss **Café Aroma Bistro – Gallery – Social Club** (www.cafearoma.org), Idyllwild's funniest and funkiest fine dining establishment. Romance awaits as lovers linger over intimate candlelit dinners as they are entertained by jazz quartets or classic blues combos. Working in tandem with some of California's best rising young culinary stars, Aroma conceptualist Frank Ferro blends his Italian grandmother's time-tested classic recipes with unique new ingredients to create beautiful dishes with French, Nuevo Latino and Asian twists. Regularly updated fine art exhibits are displayed throughout the Cafe and Library, reflecting the area's reputation as an artist haven.
For more information on Temecula wineries, visit www.temeculawines.org. For additional activities, visit www.temeculacvb.com/. For more information on Idyllwild, visit www.idyllwildchamber.com.

The above itinerary was created based on feedback from various destination marketing organizations, so we apologize if there are any minor inaccuracies. Dates and hours may vary so we suggest you confirm dates and hours in advance of visit. Updated June 2009.

MORE INTERESTING OPTIONS

OTHER INTERESTING GOURMET ATTRACTIONS

Temecula Valley Area

Temecula Farmer's Market (Temecula)
760.728.7343
This Certified Farmers Market takes place every Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in charming Old Town Temecula. It is certified by the state of California, which ensures the produce is grown locally, sold by the grower and meets all state quality standards. The Certified Farmer's Market allows local farmers to sell fieldrun produce not restricted to packing and size standards.

Pechanga Resort &Casino (Temecula)
www.pechanga.com
Pechanga Resort & Casino features a variety of international cuisines, from exceptional fine dining to quick and tasty selections for those on the go. You'll find a world of culinary delights at Pechanga's award-winning restaurants with 14 dining options including a 24-hour food court. If you fancy yourself a connoisseur with distinguished tastes, prepare to be impressed. With one of the largest wine lists in Southern California, The Great Oak Steakhouse joined the elite ranks of restaurants given an Award of Distinction by Wine Enthusiast Magazine. Only 354 other North American dining spots have received such an honor this year. The Great Oak Steakhouse has been the winner of Wine Spectator's "Award of Excellence," 5 years running with more than 850 selections featured on their wine list. Reservations for most restaurants can be made at pechanga.com.

Meritage at Callaway (Temecula)
callawaywinery.com
Since 1969, Callaway Vineyard & Winery has been recognized as a leader in producing quality wines in the Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country. Boasting spectacular panoramic vineyard and hillside views, its multi-tiered arbor terrace now offers unique tapas-style outdoor dining at **Meritage at Callaway**. Opened in April 2008, the restaurant showcases executive chef **Michael Henry**'s seasonal menus that are big on flavor and variety and paired with Callaway wines.

Creekside Grille at Wilson Creek Winery (Temecula)

wilsoncreekwinery.com
Opened in Summer 2008, the **Creekside Grille** offers delicious wine country cuisine served indoors and outdoors on a gorgeous patio equipped with overhead misters and heaters for year-round comfort. Located adjacent to lush vineyards in the Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country, the restaurant offers grilled steaks, fresh fish, braised beef ribs and owner Gerry Wilson's traditional Rueben and panini sandwiches. Meals are be paired with Wilson Creek wines by the glass or bottle.

Riverside Area

California Citrus State Historic Park (Riverside)
www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=649
This park preserves some of the rapidly vanishing cultural landscape of the citrus industry and tells the story of this industry's role in the history and development of California. The park recaptures the time when "Citrus was King" in California, recognizing the importance of the citrus industry in southern California.

Tom's Farms (Corona)
www.tomsfarms.com/locations-and-hours/visit-us.php
People come to this family attraction for the fresh produce, wine and cheese shoppe, duck pond, country furniture store, and variety of restaurants and entertainment for the kids.

MORE RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Riverside Area

Café Solé at Glen Ivy Hot Springs Spa
www.glenivy.com/index.php/resort/C18/
Locates at one of California's few "green" spas, Café Solé offers food that is healthful, nourishing, and delicious – a.k.a. "Mediterranean Cuisine of the Sun." They select ingredients from local farmers, ranchers and markets to ensure freshness while supporting sustainable practices.

Rancho Cucamonga Area

Cask 'n Cleaver
909-982-7108
For red meat, Rancho natives know the best bet is this classic California steakhouse. Its rustic redwood siding, turquoise trim, and weathered rock walls create a cozy setting.

Omaha Jack's Steakhouse
909-477-4377
Omaha Jack's is the quintessential steak-lover's steakhouse. Diners are regaled by such first-rate dishes as slow-roasted prime rib, the 12-oz. shoulder cut, and the mammoth 20-oz. porterhouse, as well as chicken and seafood.

San Bernardino Area

Claim Jumper Restaurant
909-383-1818

A family favorite for steaks, this restaurant also offers hearty portions and a lively Wild West motif. Start things off with a dose of flavor, courtesy of BBQ filet mignon quesadillas. Entrées include marinated steaks, baby back ribs, and wood-fired pizzas. If you still have room, try the sensational six-layer Chocolate Motherlode Cake for dessert. The apple-cinnamon muffin also makes a good showing. The restaurant is popular, so plan accordingly.

Lake Arrowhead/Big Bear Lake Areas

Bistro at the Mansion (Big Bear)
At The Knickerbocker Mansion
909-878-9190
The Mansion directly backs the San Bernardino National Forest which offers hiking, biking and many more outdoor activities. A full commercial kitchen is the creative workplace of Thomas Bicanic, partner and Knickerbocker executive chef. Breakfast, included with your stay, is always a treat and not to be missed. "Bistro at the Mansion" is open Friday and Saturday evenings for your dining pleasure, with the chef's 5-course menu complete with a wonderful selection of imported beers and fine wines.

Casual Elegance (Lake Arrowhead area)
909-337-8932
Featuring the best of both worlds: Traditional fine dining but leave the suit and tie at home

Idyllwild Area

Gastrognome
www.gastrognome.com
Gourmet dining a mile high in the cozy village of Idyllwild, featuring favorites like roast duck, lobster tacos and swordfish piccata.

Red Kettle
www.redkettleinc.com

For more information on wine and food options and activities in California, go to www.landofwineandfood.com**.**

###