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CULINARY ITINERARY: SONOMA/NORTH COAST

Soul-stirring beaches. Giant redwoods. Charming coastal towns, veiled by mist. These images come to mind when people think of California's North Coast, a land of mystery and romance. For foodies, thinking of North Coast areas like Sonoma and Mendocino prompt a Pavlovian response, whetting the appetite for some of the state's best wineries and restaurants.

Day One: Humboldt Counties/Mendocino

If you're feeling adventurous, venture into Humboldt County's redwood country, including a visit to Humboldt Redwoods State Park. If you decide to stay for lunch, check out **Restaurant 301** (www.carterhouse.com/restaurant301.htm) in Eureka, lauded by the likes of *Bon Appetit* and one of the few eateries in the world to win the *Wine Spectator* Grand Award. The eatery, affiliated with Carter House Inns – a group of historic Victorian hotels -- features garden-to-table, seasonal cuisine. Another great restaurant, but only open for dinner, is the **Benbow Inn Restaurant**. Located in the historic Benbow Inn (www.benbowinn.com) near the Avenue of the Giants, this local favorite offers exquisite fine dining and excellent wines – and has received the *Wine Spectator* Magazine Excellence Award for six years.

Or you may choose to start your day three hours south in Mendocino, which like many parts of California, is close to great farm country, so visitors can experience a deep connection to the food they are eating. A great place that brings this concept to life is the **Living Light Culinary Arts Institute** (www.rawfoodchef.com), the premier organic raw vegan school in the world, located a few miles north of Mendocino in Fort Bragg. Here you can tour the school, take a workshop, eat in the café or shop in the gourmet store.

For lunch, be like the locals and kick back and relax at a fun gastropub, such as **Patterson's Pub** (www.pattersonspub.com) in "so beautiful it looks almost unreal" Mendocino Village, where you can have fish cooked in Panko breadcrumbs with chips. If you're looking for fresh microbrew, try the **North Coast Brewing Company** (www.northcoastbrewing.com) or Anderson Valley Brewing Company (www.avbc.com). If you want to go green, head inland to the **Ukiah Brewing Company** (www.ubcr.com), billed as the first brewpub in the U.S. to be certified organic.

In the afternoon, no visit to the area would be complete without a stop at the pioneering **Mendocino Wine Company's** (www.mendocinowineco.com) **Parducci Wine Cellars**. Located in Ukiah, this was the first winery to be carbon neutral in the country. Here vintner Paul Dolan demonstrates how organic, biodynamic and sustainable farming and business practices can translate into the finest quality wines. Visitors are welcome to participate in tours and tastings, or grab a quick gourmet meal. If you don't have time to get to the vineyard, try the Mendocino Wine Tasting Room in the town of Mendocino. Other great wineries to try for tastings and tours are **Goldeneye Winery** (www.goldeneyewinery.com) in Anderson Valley, which also offers lodging and Pinot Noir pairing demonstrations, and **Brutocao Cellars** (www.brutocaozellars.com), with tasting rooms in Hopland and Philo. The Hopland tasting room features tastings of estate-grown olive

oil also available for purchase by the bottle or in bulk. The winery also has bocce ball courts and its own restaurant, The Crushed Grape. The **Navarro Vineyards** (www.navarrowine.com) in Philo features award-winning wines, including Chardonnays, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, as well as non-alcohol varietal winegrape juice for nondrinkers.

If you're more of a chocoholic, visit the **Mendocino Chocolate Company** (www.mendocino-chocolate.com) for yummy local fudge, truffles, barks and more. If you don't trust yourself to leave enough to take home, don't worry – they ship worldwide.

For dinner, you can't go wrong with the Mendocino area's charming and outstanding restaurants, such as the **Little River Restaurant** (www.littleriverinn.com), featuring local and seasonal cuisine – or enjoy seafood-with-a-view at **Chapter & Moon** (707-962-1643), **La Petite Rive** (www.lapetiterive.com) or **Heron's by the Sea** (707) 962-0680). Crazy about crab? Try **Café Beaujolais's** (www.cafebeaujolais.com) crab cakes, which won first place in the Annual Crab Cake Cook-Off. If you're a Francophile, you'll find French cuisine at its finest at **Rendezvous** (www.rendezvousinn.com) in Fort Bragg. If you're a strict herbivore, you'll dine in heaven at **Stanford Inn's Raven's Restaurant** (www.stanfordinn.com), nationally acclaimed for its vegetarian and vegan cuisine and featuring ingredients from their certified organic gardens. Other local hotspots with a local or seasonal spin include **MacCallum House Restaurant** (www.maccallumhouse.com) and **Mendo Bistro** (www.mendobistro.com) in Fort Bragg.

For more information on Mendocino County, visit www.gomendo.com. For information on Humboldt County, visit www.redwoods.info. For information on Mendocino wineries, visit www.mendowine.com, and for Anderson Valley, see www.avwines.com.

Day Two: Lake County/Healdsburg

Drive two hours to Nice in Lake County, home of the appropriately named Clear Lake, the largest clear lake entirely within California. Vineyards here are planted 1,300 to 2,000 feet in elevation, within sight of dormant volcano Mt. Konocti. These elevations provide a later growing season start, and conditions are great for Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. Situated along 2 miles of lakeshore, the agricultural resort-style winery **Ceago Vinegarden** (www.ceago.com), owned and operated by Jim Fetzer of the prominent winemaking family, promotes a holistic farming environment for plant and animal life. A showcase of biodynamic winemaking and agriculture, the estate surrounds a Hacienda-style compound of buildings with herb gardens, grapes, kiwis, olives, walnuts, figs, lavender, a variety of seasonal plantings and wine grapes, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc. Domestic and wild animals wander the property, demonstrating how both the animal and plant kingdoms work together in an agricultural environment. During summer months, Ceago's Courtyard Café is open for lunch, serving creative and inspiring dishes with a focus on estate, organic and locally produced ingredients. Special events are held throughout the year and private tours are available.

In the afternoon, drive 90 minutes to Healdsburg in Sonoma County. Sonoma County's diverse topography, soils and microclimates is suitable for a wide variety of grapes, making Sonoma one of the most prolific wine-growing regions in the state. More than 60,000 vine-filled acres fill 13 valleys, producing primarily Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but also just about every other varietal. In Healdsburg you'll find one of the most famous vineyards in California – **Kendall-Jackson Wine Estates** (www.kj.com). Try some samples in the tasting room or head south 10 minutes to Fulton, site of their Wine Center, where Executive Chef Justin Wangler creates special wine and food pairings focusing on the winery's upper-tier Highland Estates and Stature wines. Visitors to the Wine Center can sample some of the newest vintages of these rare and vineyard-designated wines, paired with a delectable array of tasty food samples, all served tapas-style.

In Dry Creek Valley just outside of Healdsburg, visit the charming **Lambert Bridge Winery** (www.lambertbridge.com), where shaded teak dining tables invite you to enjoy great wine and great food shared with friends and family. Herb and edible flower gardens border the alfresco kitchen and wood-fired pizza ovens that star in their seasonal events. Bring your picnic basket and make time to enjoy the beauty of this outdoor escape. Further up the road is the spectacular villa of **Ferrari-Carrano Vineyards** (www.ferrari-carrano.com) with its five acres of Italian/French/Japanese style gardens, and **Ridge Lytton Springs Dry Creek Valley** (www.ridgevine.com) is a short drive away, and has a unique energy-efficient straw bale winery powered by solar energy. Also outside of Healdsburg in Alexander Valley is **Rodney Strong Vineyards** (www.rodneystrong.com) with tours, tastings, bocce courts and very popular summer concert series. For a quick gourmet meal, try slow food – fast – at **Bovolo** (www.bovolorrestaurant.com), with food by celebrated chefs Duskie Estes and John Stewart. For more formal fare, visit **Madrona Manor Wine Country Inn & Restaurant** (www.madronamanor.com) in Healdsburg, which is one of the top five restaurants in Napa and Sonoma counties, according to Zagat. This romantic, historic inn's restaurant received one star in the 2008 Michelin Red Guide San Francisco, Bay Area & Wine Country Restaurants.

Or, if you're more into bubbly, head west/southwest from Healdsburg to Guerneville in the Russian River Valley, home of the renowned **Korbel Champagne Cellars** (www.korbel.com), America's premier champagne for the past 120 years. Here you can tour the cellars for free, eat in the gourmet café or take a tour of the amazing rose gardens. To view more wineries in the area, visit www.rrvw.org.

Sonoma Country is known not only for its wine, but also for its cuisine, created by using seasonal and just-picked, locally-grown fruits, vegetables and herbs as well as local meats, fish, cheeses, olive oils and breads. Farms have supplied gourmet ingredients to elite San Francisco restaurants since Gold Rush days. In the evening, head to Santa Rosa for dinner and an overnight stay. One of the premier restaurants is **Zazu Restaurant & Farm** (www.zazurestaurant.com), Duskie Estes and John Stewart's gourmet roadhouse restaurant. The food is all about the healthiest local ingredients – some from their own garden – and being “wine friendly but uncomplicated.” Or, get your garlic fix at **Johnny Garlic's** (www.johnnygarlics.com), affiliated with Guy Fieri, star of the Food Network. Or try Guy's eclectic and fun **Tex Wasabi's Rock-N-Roll Sushi-BBQ** (www.texwasabis.com).

Day Three: Santa Rosa/Kenwood/Glen Ellen

Start the day by visiting one of the participating **Farm Trails** (www.farmtrails.org) farms in Sonoma County, featuring immersive experiences like farm stays, produce farms or farmer's markets. Oenophiles must tour or taste at **Benziger Family Winery** (www.benziger.com) in nearby Glen Ellen, which is creating a new definition of wine quality through its certified-sustainable, organic and biodynamic winegrowing practices. Their 85-acre, certified Biodynamic Sonoma Mountain estate has become a research and teaching center for the cultivation of grapes with more flavor, intensity and site-specific vineyard character. The family shares its farming knowledge and experience with longtime grower partners throughout Sonoma County, and offer tram tours through the vineyards for visitors. Or check out **Kunde Estate Vineyards and Wineries** (www.kunde.com), a 100-year-old family winery with tasting room, wine cave tours and eco-tours.

Nestled on a 156-acre wine country estate in the heart of Sonoma County, **Paradise Ridge Winery** (www.paradiseridgewinery.com) offers spectacular natural vistas overlooking the Russian River Valley. Expansive decks and terraces open to panoramic landscapes, including rolling vineyards and pastoral wine country scenery. It's the perfect place to try some amazing wines, relax and enjoy one of the most beautiful views in Sonoma County.

Chocoholics should visit the tasting room of **Wine Country Chocolate & Truffles** (www.winecountrychocolates.com) in Jack London Village. Also located in this gourmet strip mall is **Figone's of California Olive Oil and Press** (www.figoneoliveoil.com) and **Raymond Cheesemonger** (www.raymondcheesemongers.com).

Try one of the best restaurants in Santa Rosa for dinner – **Syrah Bistro** (www.syrahbistro.com). Here Chef Josh Silvers offers a monthly changing menu of seasonal California-French cuisine, consistently focusing on organic and sustainably farmed fruits and vegetables. Or, take a short drive to California Cider Company's **Ace-In-The-Hole Pub** (www.acecider.com) in Sebastopol, credited with initiating the national cider renaissance. It's also the second-largest specialty beer and cider marketing company in the U.S. Another gem in Sebastopol is the **French Garden Restaurant and Brasserie** (www.frenchgardenrestaurant.com), which farms its own organic produce.

Day Four: Sonoma/Petaluma

Start the day at the historic **Buena Vista Winery** (www.buenavistacarneros.com), one of the oldest in the state, which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary. They feature a wide selection of award-winning wines, a gift shop featuring gourmet foods and elegant and whimsical merchandise, and beautiful picnic areas. Create your own wine blend at **Ravenswood Winery** (www.ravenswood-wine.com), just outside the charming town center of Sonoma, which has a historic shopping plaza in the heart of downtown. Another winery just out of town is **Robledo Family Winery** (www.robledofamilywinery.com), the first Mexican-owned winery and tasting room in California, a great example of an immigrant family who found the American Dream.

For lunch, head to one of many great restaurants in the plaza, or try **Estate Restaurant** (www.thegeneralsdaughter.com/), recently touted by *Gourmet* magazine as the best restaurant in Sonoma, and featuring California Low country cooking. Next door is the renowned **Ramekins** (www.ramekins.com) culinary school, offering great classes. Or check out **The Girl and the Fig** (www.thegirlandthefig.com), a renowned eatery with a French-inspired menu, French aperitifs, an award-winning "Rhone Alone" wine list, seasonal menu, cheese and charcuterie platters and outdoor patio.

In the afternoon, visit the historic town of Petaluma to experience the **Spring Hill Cheese Co./Petaluma Creamery** (www.springhillcheese.com), an organic Jersey cow dairy farm specializing in white, sage, garlic and Jersey yellow cheddar, firehouse, Quark, Jack, Portuguese and fresh curd. Shop in the retail store or take advantage of the petting zoo and hayride. Or visit the **Adobe Pumpkin Farm** (www.adobepumpkinfarm.com), a 30-acre working farm that features a "you-pick" concept for seasonal items such as pumpkins (fall), strawberries (spring), tomatoes (summer) and fresh-cut flowers and gift shop all year. A haunted house, farm animals, hayrides and corn maze are also featured in the fall.

For dinner, try **Dempseys Brewery & Restaurant** (www.dempseys.com), a gastropub featuring award-winning brews made on-site, as well as fresh local ingredients, many grown exclusively for Dempsey's by Red Rooster Ranch.

For more information on Sonoma County, visit www.sonomacounty.com or www.sonomawine.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

GASTROPUBS

Santa Rosa Area

Russian River Brewing Company (Santa Rosa)
www.russianriverbrewing.com

The California Cider Company (Sebastopol)
www.acecider.com

Eel River Brewery (Fortuna) – America’s first certified organic brewery
www.eelriverbrewing.com

Russian River Brewing Company (Santa Rosa)
www.russianriverbrewing.com

Stumptown Brewery & Smokehouse (Guerneville)
www.stumptown.com

Sebastopol Brewing Company (Sebastopol)
www.sebastopolbrewing.com

Third Street Ale Works Brewpub (Santa Rosa)
www.thirdstreetaleworks.com

AGRITOURISM

Mendocino Area

Gowan’s Oak Tree Fruit Stand (Philo)
(707) 895-3353

Gowan’s fruits are an Anderson Valley tradition that dates back to 1880. This luscious fruit has been sold roadside underneath the famed Gowan’s Oak Tree for fifty years. They have now expanded to a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and their notorious apple juice.

Apple Farm Fruit Stand (Philo)
www.philoapplefarm.com

A fully functioning organic farm and agricultural community, the apple farm specializes in growing and processing its namesake--apples-- they also offer weekend cooking classes, lodging, and an opportunity to experience the bounty of nature.

Santa Rosa Area

Tierra Vegetables (Santa Rosa)
www.tierravegetables.com

Full House Farm Vacation Rental & Retreat (Sebastopol)
www.fullhousefarm.com

Fisher Farm (Sebastopol)
(707) 823-4817

Twin Hill Ranch (Sebastopol)
www.twinhillranch.com

Redwood Hill Farm Goat Dairy & Creamery (Sebastopol)
www.redwoodhill.com

Gabriel Farm (Sebastopol)
707-829-0617

Stoncroft Farm/Sonoma Honey Co. (Santa Rosa)
707-584-1414

Lake County/Healdsburg Area

Grandma's Pumpkin Patch (Healdsburg)
707-431-8058

Sonoma/Petaluma Area

Canvas Ranch (Petaluma)
www.canvasranch.com

McEvoy Ranch (Petaluma)
www.mcevoyranch.com

WINE PROGRAMS

Winery wine & food pairing programs:

Santa Rosa Area

Blackstone Winery (Kenwood)
www.blackstonewinery.com

B.R. Cohn Winery (Kenwood)
www.brcohn.com

Chateau St. Jean (Kenwood)
www.chateautjean.com

De Loach Vineyards (Santa Rosa)

www.deloachvineyards.com

Kaz Vineyards and Winery (Kenwood)

www.kazwinery.com

Kenwood Vineyards (Kenwood)

www.kenwoodvineyards.com

Lake County/Healdsburg Areas

Amphora Wines (Healdsburg)

www.amphorawines.com

Dutcher Crossing Winery (Geyserville)

www.dutchercrossingwinery.com

Ferrari-Carano Vineyards & Winery (Healdsburg)

www.ferrari-carano.com

Fritz Winery (Cloverdale)

www.fritzwinery.com

J Vineyards & Winery (Healdsburg)

www.jwine.com

Lynmar Winery (Sebastopol)

www.lynmarwinery.com

Michel-Schlumberger Wine Estate (Healdsburg)

www.michelschlumberger.com

Peterson Winery (Healdsburg)

www.petersonwinery.com

Raymond Burr Vineyards

www.raymondburrvineyards.com

Seghesio Family Vineyards (Healdsburg)

www.seghesio.com

Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards (Windsor)

www.sonomacutrer.com

Sonoma/Petaluma/Carneros Areas

Cline Cellars (Sonoma)

www.clinecellars.com

Gloria Ferrer Winery (Sonoma)
www.gloriaferrer.com

Schug Carneros Estate Winery
Schugwinery.com

Viansa Winery & Italian Marketplace (Sonoma)
www.viansa.com

MORE RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mendocino Area

Boonville General Store (Boonville)
707-895-9477

A friendly atmosphere that truly portrays Boonville's bucolic nature, serving upscale deli items including cheeses, meats, pizzas, soup, and salads.

Boont Berry Farm Store (Boonville)
707-895-3576

Organic market with fresh produce and health conscious lunch items, including baguettes, famous local eggs, and a bounty of fruit, all grown within the county lines.

Bridget Dolan's Pub (Elk)
www.griffinn.com/pub.htm

Pass some time at this beloved Irish Pub in the heart of Elk and you'll feel like you're back in the "Old Country." Featuring a hearty menu with ribs, fish, and their famous bangers and mash, Dolan's also fits the bill for simply sipping on a pint of Guinness and engaging in a "bit o' the Blarney."

Harbor House Inn (Elk)
www.theharborhouseinn.com

Oceanside dining located north of Elk in a beautiful location perfect for a quiet sunset lit dinner. A California cuisine prix fixe menu is presented using the freshest local produce and seafood available.

Albion River Inn (Albion)
www.albionriverinn.com/

Sumptuous fare, in a warm environment with breathtaking views. Featuring an award-winning wine list and full bar (including over 100 Scotches). Exquisite appetizers are popular here as well.

Santa Rosa Area

Vintner's Inn (Santa Rosa)
www.vintnersinn.com

Josef's Restaurant (Santa Rosa)
www.josefsrestaurant.com

La Gare (Santa Rosa)

www.lagarerestaurant.com

Mosaic Restaurant & Wine Lounge (Forestville)

www.mosaiceats.com

K & L Bistro (Sebastopol)

707-823-6614

West County Grill (Sebastopol)

www.westcountygrill.com

ARTISAN CHEESE FACTORIES

Marin French Cheese (numerous locations)

www.marinfrenchcheese.com

OTHER INTERESTING GOURMET ATTRACTIONS

Santa Rosa Area

Traverso's Gourmet Foods & Liquors, Inc. (Santa Rosa)

www.traversos.com

Arrigoni's Café (Santa Rosa)

www.arrigonis.com

Fiesta & Pacific Markets (Sebastopol)

www.fiestamkt.com

Figone's Olive Oil Company (Glen Ellen)

www.figoneoliveoil.com

The Olive Press (Sonoma)

www.theolivepress.com

Wine Country Honey (Santa Rosa)

www.winecountryhoney.com

John Ash & Co. at Vintners Inn Event Center (Santa Rosa)

www.vintnersinn.com/whats happening.html

Viva Culinary Institute (Sebastopol)

www.studyabroaditaly.com/viva

Lake County/Healdsburg Areas

Relish Culinary School (Healdsburg)

www.relishculinary.com

Mendocino/Humboldt Areas

The Samoa Cookhouse – Museum of Cookhouse and Timber Heritage (near Eureka)
www.samoacookhouse.net

WINE PROGRAMS

Additional wine blending seminars where you create your own wine are given at:

Lake County/Healdsburg Areas

Chateau Felice (Healdsburg)
www.chateaufelice.com

Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards & Winery (Healdsburg)
www.chalkhill.com

For more information on wine and food activities check out www.landofwineandfood.com.

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