

TASTES *of* ITALIA

BASICS OF THE ITALIAN KITCHEN

WINTER 2020

COMFORT FOODS

PIZZA, PASTA AND FOODS OF FLORENCE



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COOKING WITH CITRUS

A Squeeze of Sunshine for Winter

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Making the Perfect Panini

GOING COASTAL

THE SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS
APPELLATION IN CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA HAS MUCH
TO OFFER IN ADDITION
TO ITS WINES.

TEXT: PATRICK BARTLETT & TAMMY MINN

TUCKED BETWEEN COASTAL WATERS

and tall redwoods, The Santa Cruz Mountains appellation in Central California is home to one of the state's earliest American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). More than 60 wineries, 200 small vineyards, and approximately 1,300 acres of wine grapes call this region home. Those vineyards largely include Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and other varietals (most notably Merlot and Zinfandel), according to the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association. But growers have also had success with Italian varietals, too.

Resting above Monterey Bay and below San Francisco, the region has much to offer in addition to some great wine tasting.

In the beach town of Santa Cruz, you can surf, shop or spend the day at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, where you'll find one of the nation's oldest operating wooden roller coasters: the Giant Dipper, which first opened in 1924. When done with all the sun and fun, seek out the famed Marianne's Ice Cream parlor. In business since 1947, the shop offers 105 flavors.

Drive into the Santa Cruz Mountains and you'll find California's oldest state park, Big Basin Redwoods, which was established in 1902. Mountain roads are surrounded by ancient redwoods, some of which are more than 50 feet in diameter and as tall as the Statue of Liberty. The park, which has more than 80 miles





Wine drinkers sample one of the many red wines produced in this appellation.

of trails, includes views of the Pacific Ocean, waterfalls, wildlife and birds. In 2020, the Nature Museum, which has been closed for renovation, is expected to reopen. The new facility will house exhibits that combine an interactive experience with the park's traditional natural history focus.

Santa Cruz also has many other attractions, including Lighthouse Field State Beach, the Seymour Marine Discovery Center, and Mission Santa Cruz.

But if you visit for the wine, this appellation won't disappoint. It's important to note that the tasting rooms in the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA are not concentrated in specific areas. This region is more of a meander, like a Sunday drive. But along the way you'll discover charming towns like Saratoga, Los Gatos, Big Basin, Aptos, Woodside and, of course, Santa Cruz.

As with many wine appellations in the United States, you'll find Italian influences.

In the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Bargetto family has been making wine for three generations. It began with brothers Phillip and John Bargetto, who emigrated from Castelnuovo Don Bosco in the Piedmont region of Italy. They founded their first winery, South Montebello Vineyard and Wine Company, in San Francisco in 1910. They closed that location in 1917 and purchased the present site of Bargetto Winery in Soquel in 1918.

The Bargettos' Regan Estate Vineyards includes nearly 40 acres planted with 12 different varietals and clones. Located about 15 miles from the winery, the vineyards offer beautiful views of Monterey Bay. The cool-climate vineyards produce wines that are rich and intense, including Pinot Noir, Merlot, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay and several Italian varietals, including Dolcetto. The 2017 vintage is deep ruby red with aromas of black cherry, black pepper and toasty oak.

Bargetto Winery has two tasting rooms: one in Soquel and one in Monterey. See bargetto.com for more details or to shop online.

The Santa Cruz Mountains AVA has many great places to sample wines from the region. Bonny Doon Vineyard, in Davenport, is one of the most eccentric, quirky and fun wineries you'll ever experience. Founder Randall Grahm originally wanted to focus on French Burgundian wine styles, but after researching the area, he discovered a classic Mediterranean climate and soil type paired better with grape varietals found in the Rhône region of France.

Bonny Doon is credited with offering one of the first French-style blends in California, a blend originally produced in the Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape. This wine traditionally offers up to 13 different grapes in a blend, including one that happens to be white. Bonny Doon's offering is called Le Cigare Volant, and was first labeled in 1984.

How out-of-the-box is Bonny Doon? They offer canned wine. The 2017 Fizzy Pink of the Earth, offered in a four-pack, was named one of *Wine Enthusiast's* "American Wines Under \$25 to Celebrate Labor Day." bonnydoonvineyard.com

Thomas Fogarty Winery in Woodside was founded in 1978 by Thomas Fogarty, a practicing heart surgeon and

medical device inventor, who at first considered planting kiwi on his acreage.

On his 350 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Fogarty has about 30 acres of grapes. Ecologically focused, the vineyards are all organic and minimally irrigated, and all 350 acres of the estate are included in the Williamson Act, meaning that the entire estate is protected as a Heritage Oak and Fir forest.

The two grapes this winery focuses on are Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. An important characteristic of the winemaking is the even-handed use of new oak. The goal is to offer fresh, lively wines, with subdued oak characteristics. The winemakers achieve this by using only about 15 to 20 percent new oak in the aging programs each year.

The winery has earned praise from esteemed wine critics, including William Kelley, Jeb Dunnuck and Antonio Galloni. fogartywinery.com

Previously known as Paul Masson, The Mountain Winery in Saratoga holds an important place in California wine history.

Paul Masson, a young Frenchman, arrived in San Francisco in 1878. He was passionate about making sparkling wine and eventually did, winning prestigious awards, including the Paris Award at the Paris Expo in 1900. He became known as "The Champagne King of California."

He established his winery in Saratoga, and La Cresta, Masson's "Vineyard in the Sky," was completed in 1905. A year later the winery's cellar lay in ruins, a casualty of the great San Francisco earthquake. By 1907, a new wine cellar stood in its place.

Prohibition wiped out his fortune, and he sold the winery to Martin Ray in 1936.

In 1958, a concert bowl was added to the property and a summer concert series was launched. The tradition continues with artists like Diana Krall; Earth, Wind and Fire; and Steve Martin and Martin Short.

Today, Mountain Winery focuses on Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. mountainwinery.com

Cinnabar Winery in Saratoga was established in 1983 by Tom Mudd, a scientist and a Stanford-educated engineer. He found winemaking a scientific challenge, and began dabbling with it in his garage. Mudd passed away in 2007, but his winemaking team still oversees every aspect of the program.

Cinnabar offers many of the varieties thriving in the Santa Cruz Region: Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as Mourvèdre, Grenache and Syrah. There's something for every wine-loving palate, including a Port-style dessert wine. cinnabarwinery.com

That's just a sample of what this region offers. Also see Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Growers Association (scmwa.com); California Winery Advisor (californiawineryadvisor.com) and Visit California (visitcalifornia.com; search Santa Cruz).

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Wineries and tasting rooms offer a wide range of tasting options.