

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION



WINEENTHUSIAST
MAGAZINE

THE INSIDERS' GUIDE TO

CALIFORNIA

What to Drink
Where to Dine
Where to Stay

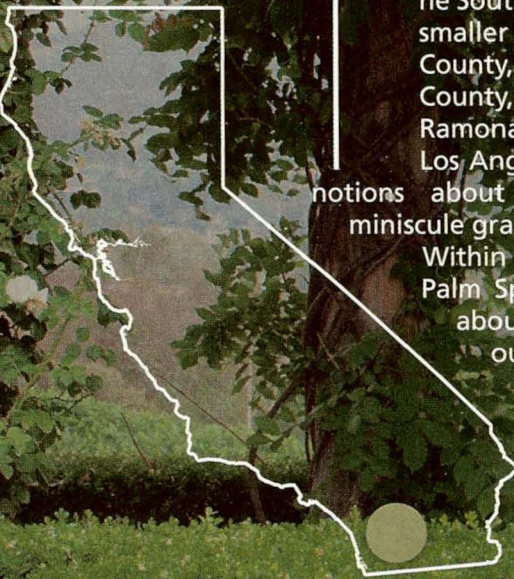
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Top Winery
Tasting Rooms
to Visit



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THE SOUTH COAST



The South Coast appellation encompasses many smaller areas: Temecula Valley in Riverside County, Cucamonga Valley in San Bernardino County, and the wineries of San Diego County's Ramona Valley and San Pasqual. It also holds Los Angeles County, which—despite romantic notions about vineyards in Malibu—is relatively miniscule grape-wise.

Within about an hour's drive of San Diego and Palm Springs, San Diego County's wineries—about 60—spread northeast of the city outside of Escondido. Many buy their grapes from elsewhere though; only about 200 vineyard acres exist.

Temecula is home to about 35 wineries and 60 growers, with just a small percentage of its acres—about 2,000—devoted to grapes.

Viticulture on the South Coast dates to the 1769 founding of the Mission San Diego de Alcalá where Father Junípero Serra planted the state's first vineyards. However, substantial planting in Southern California didn't take place until the late 1960s, with Brookside Winery and Callaway Winery in Temecula leading the way.

Near Temecula, Cucamonga Valley serves as a source of dry-farmed old-vine Zinfandel. Sonoma-based Zinfandel producer Carol Shelton makes a version every year from Cucamonga's Lopez Vineyard, which was planted in 1918, describing the stunted 18-inch gnarls as "bush vines." She calls the Asian-spice-tinged wine Monga Zin.



WEATHER RAPPORT

SOUTH COAST WINEMAKERS KNOW THE REGION'S SCARY-CONSISTENT CLIMATE (ALSO KNOWN AS PERFECT, GORGEOUS AND ENVY-INDUCING) IS WHAT SETS IT APART FROM THE REST OF CALIFORNIA AND ARE CHOOSING THE GRAPES THAT PLAY TO THIS POWERFUL STRENGTH.

SOUTH COAST'S TOP VARIETIES

● *Zinfandel*

Weighty Temecula Zin is often aged in American oak and tends toward a rich and full-bodied profile, with soft tannins and ripe blackberry and plum.

● *Syrah*

Temecula Syrah is often deep, dark and ageworthy, displaying powerfully rich, oaky blackberry and plum flavors, with swirls of black pepper and chocolate anise.

● *Tempranillo*

Happy in this warm Mediterranean climate, South Coast Tempranillo is both rich and powerful yet Pinot-esque with notes of earthy, spiced cherry, soy and herb.

● *Cabernet Sauvignon*

South Coast Cabernet Sauvignon has intense aromatics of black cherry, plum and cassis, with smoky overtones that venture into vanilla and licorice.



Semi-rural and sparsely planted, the South Coast wine region is a getaway playground in San Diego's backyard. In particular, the Temecula Valley's resorts, restaurants and golf courses cater to legions of urban visitors.

Wine-wise, the area has suffered viticultural vicissitudes over the years, only to find itself today in the midst of a modern and major enological revival.

LOSS YIELDS INSPIRATIO

Warm, with minimal coastal influence, the Temecula Valley was recognized as its own American Viticultural Area in 1984, and originally pursued the growing of Bordeaux varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. But when Pierce's Disease—a fatal grapevine blight—hit almost two decades ago, it had the chance to rethink.

Out of tragedy came inspiration. Many of the area's growers realized that their climate was not always suited for these kinds of grapes, and ultimately, why try and compete head-to-head with so many other areas of California?

Instead a new generation has focused on growing Mediterranean varieties like Tempranillo, Sangiovese and Syrah—grapes that love a warm, hot, dry climate. These growers and winemakers are reinventing Temecula and the wider South Coast region by finding the right grapes for their conditions and reaching new levels of quality in the cellar.

SETTING DOWN ROOTS

Among the earliest adventurous souls to put down vine stakes were Vince and Audrey Cilurzo. A television lighting director, Vince Cilurzo and his wife planted Chenin Blanc and Petite Sirah and sold grapes to Brookside Winery. They inspired plenty of followers before opening their own winery in 1978.

No longer in operation, the Cilurzos have another claim to fame: their son, Vinnie, is the brewmaster behind the perpetually packed Russian River Brewing Company in Santa Rosa. His sister's name is Chenin.

Callaway Vineyards and Winery was among the earliest to plant in any sizeable way here,

on a 1,600-foot-elevation plateau, becoming Temecula's first winery. A 1974 Callaway White Riesling was served for Queen Elizabeth's bicentennial lunch in Manhattan, where, it was reported, she partook of two glasses.

Founded by business mogul Ely Callaway, Jr., who became good friends with the Cilurzos, Callaway always believed Temecula was only suitable for white wine grapes, a position many others never agreed with and felt was harmful to the region's reputation.

By 1981 Callaway was ready to move on. He sold the winery to conglomerate Hiram Walker for \$14 million and went on to become the world's largest maker of golf clubs as well as to develop the Big Bertha driver; his mother's cousin was Bobby Jones.

■ **“The South Coast is in the midst of a major grape revival.”**

Hiram later re-sold the property to Allied Domecq. Years of stagnation ensued until 2005 when Callaway once again became privately owned and revitalized by the Lin family of San Diego. It remains amongst the area's most popular winery, restaurant, golf and wedding destinations.

OVER THE RAINBOW GAP

The Temecula Valley appellation is partly defined by its Rainbow Gap, which separates the Santa Rosa and Santa Margarita mountains. The gap lets in air from the Pacific Ocean, two-dozen miles west, and serves as both a geological and geographical landmark.

Lower elevation vineyards in the valley sit between 1,200 and 1,600 feet, while the La Cresta and Agua Tibia Mountain area, dripping with good Syrah, is 1,600 to 2,400 feet, with the mountain's peak at 4,779 feet.

A muddle of old and new, the area maintains Old Town Temecula, a restored version of its circa-1859 Old West heritage, along with

● Viognier

Rich in honeysuckle, apple and stone fruit, especially peach and apricot, South Coast Viognier is also long on the finish, with traces of grapefruit and white pepper.



the posh Pechanga Resort and Casino, the largest casino in the western United States with over 500 rooms and eight restaurants.

The region is also marked by an abundance of winery restaurants, each one more luxurious than the next. This dining profusion contrasts with an agriculturally preserved area such as the Napa Valley, where very few winery restaurants have historically been allowed.

Callaway, Leoness Cellars, Falkner Winery, Ponte Winery, Thornton, Baily and Wilson Creek Winery all have restaurants onsite, as does South Coast Winery Resort and Spa. South Coast makes big, bold Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah from higher elevation vineyards and has won awards for its sparkling Gewürztraminer, Malbec and Tempranillo.

Other producers to know include Hart Winery, Middle Ridge and Monte de Oro, which are producing fine, meaty reds.

THE STARS OF SAN DIEGO

In San Diego County, Fallbrook is among the biggest and best producers. Like Fazeli Cellars, Lorenzi Estate and Mount Palomar, Fallbrook tends toward Meritage and other red blends. Orfila Vineyards and Winery in the San Pasqual Valley outside of Escondido makes some nice Syrah and Viognier from estate-grown grapes.

Established in 2008, Vesper Vineyards in the Ramona Valley is one to watch for Marsanne and Roussanne. Vesper's founders Chris Broomell and Alysha Stehly are committed to boosting the reputation of San Diego County wines and vines. Both from citrus-growing families, they have given up stints in other parts of California to focus exclusively on San Diego, unexpectedly growing Pinot Noir, Vermentino and Grenache Blanc.

■ THE ARGENTINA CONNECTION

Orfila Vineyards and Winery in San Pasqual was founded by Alejandro Orfila of Argentina, where his family-run Jose Orfila Winery still exists. Orfila served as Embassy Secretary in the Argentine Foreign Service and as Argentine Ambassador to Japan, and his father was governor of the Argentine state of Mendoza.

