



Discover
CALIFORNIA

winecentral

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY



California is well known for Silicon Valley and Hollywood, but at its core, it's an agricultural paradise. Bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the east and desert to the west, California essentially has both a Maritime and Mediterranean climate. It's dizzying amount of soil types and micro-climates allow for a wide array of grape varieties to be grown and wine styles to be produced. Proximity to the Pacific Ocean and vineyard elevation greatly influence wine flavour.

Inland vs. Coastal

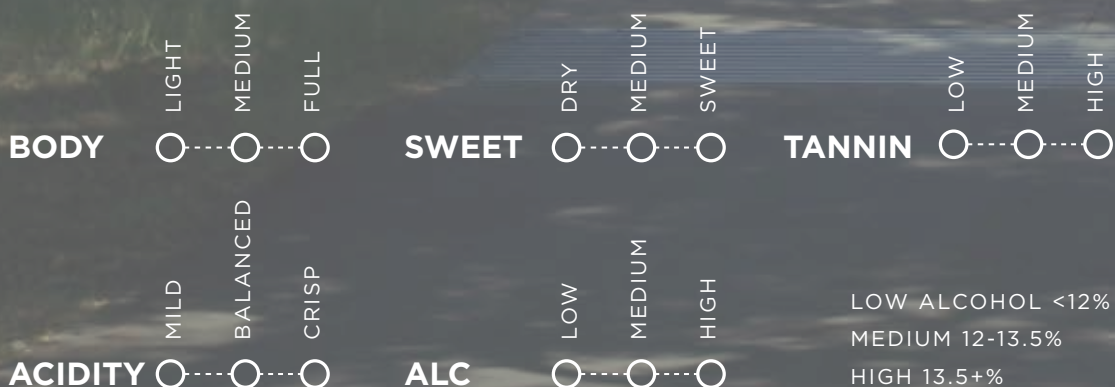
Regions close to the coast tend to be cooler, with fresh ocean breezes and morning fog tempering the hot California sun. Coastal wines will feel brighter on the palate, with firmer tannins and fresher fruit flavours. By contrast, inland areas are warmer, drier, and produce rich, full-bodied wines with tropical notes.

Hills vs. Valleys

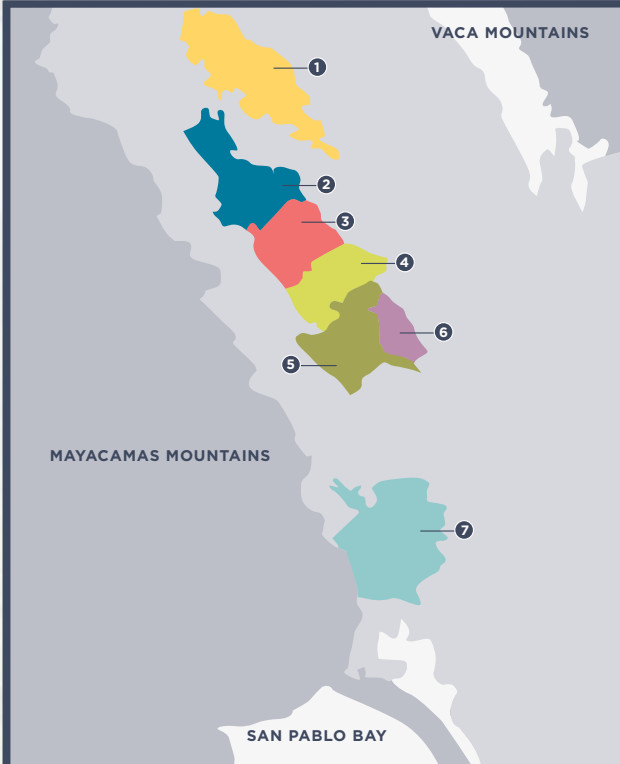
Elevation has a similar impact. Hillside vineyards tend to be cooler and ripen later than those on the valley floor. This is because hillside vineyards have a bigger temperature difference between day and night. So, wines made from the hills will have more structure and tarter fruit notes than those from the valley floor, which are rich and plush.

KEY TO INTENSTIY SCALES

Guide to each wine variety's intensity notes.

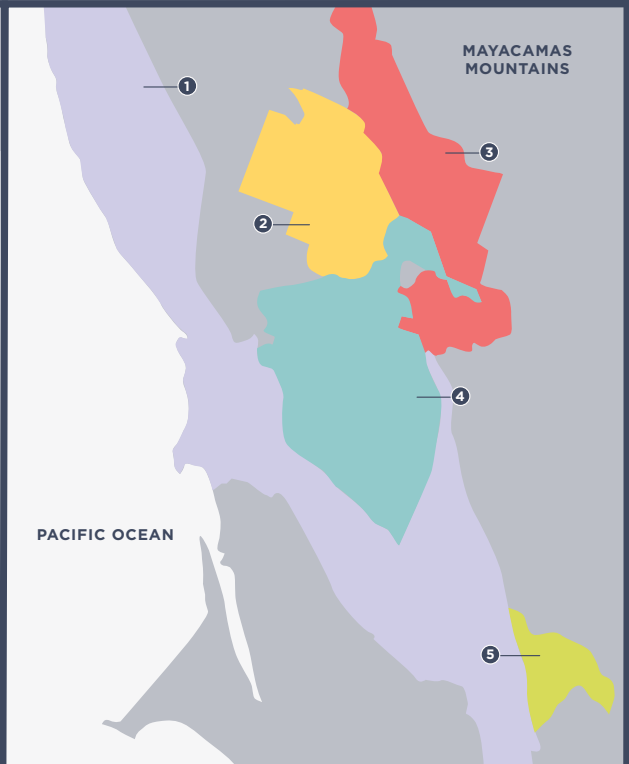


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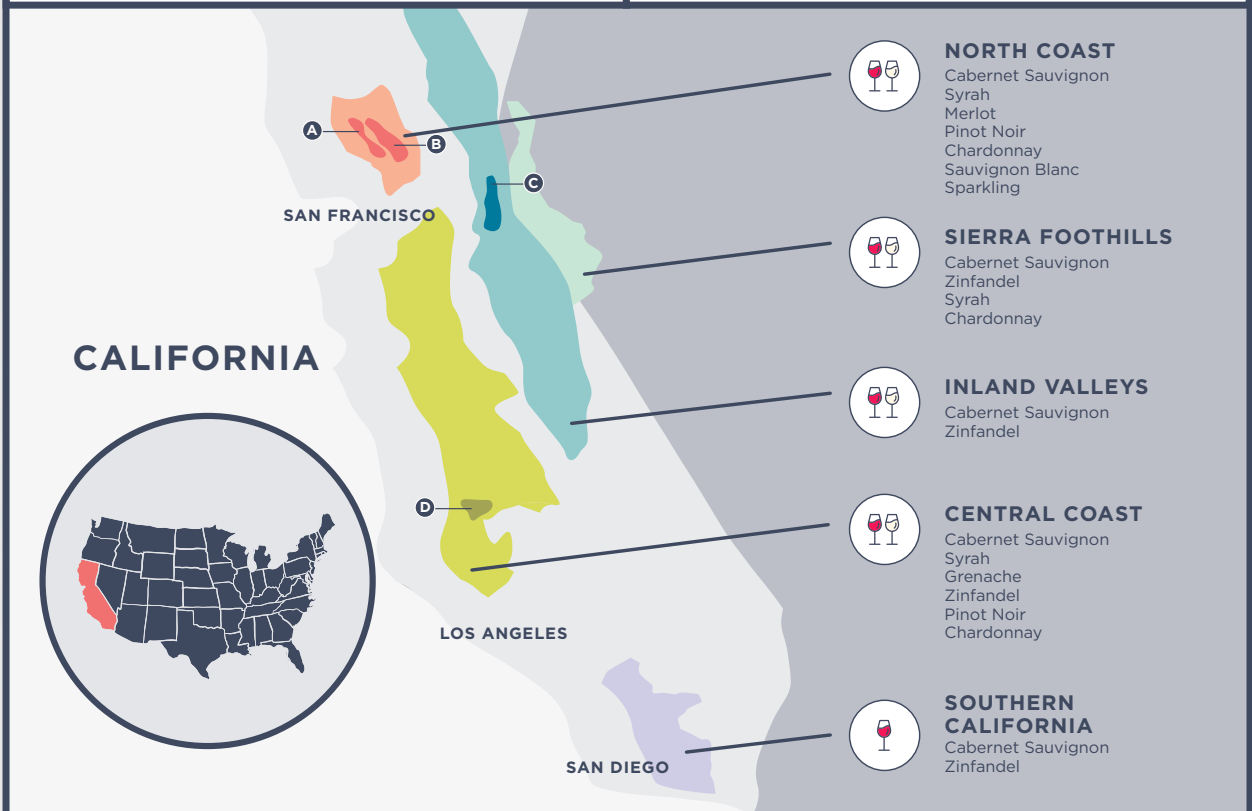
NAPA VALLEY - MAJOR SUB AVA REGIONS

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 Howell Mountain | 3 Rutherford | 6 Stags Leap |
| 2 St Helena | 4 Oakville | 7 Carneros |
| 3 Rutherford | 5 Yountville | |



SONOMA - MAJOR SUB AVA REGIONS

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1 Sonoma Coast | 3 Alexander Valley | 5 Carneros |
| 2 Dry Creek Valley | 4 Russian River Valley | |



NORTH COAST

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Syrah
- Merlot
- Pinot Noir
- Chardonnay
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Sparkling

SIERRA FOOTHILLS

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Zinfandel
- Syrah
- Chardonnay

INLAND VALLEYS

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Zinfandel

CENTRAL COAST

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Syrah
- Grenache
- Zinfandel
- Pinot Noir
- Chardonnay

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Zinfandel

SUB AVA REGIONS

NORTH COAST

- A Sonoma B Napa Valley

SIERRA FOOTHILLS

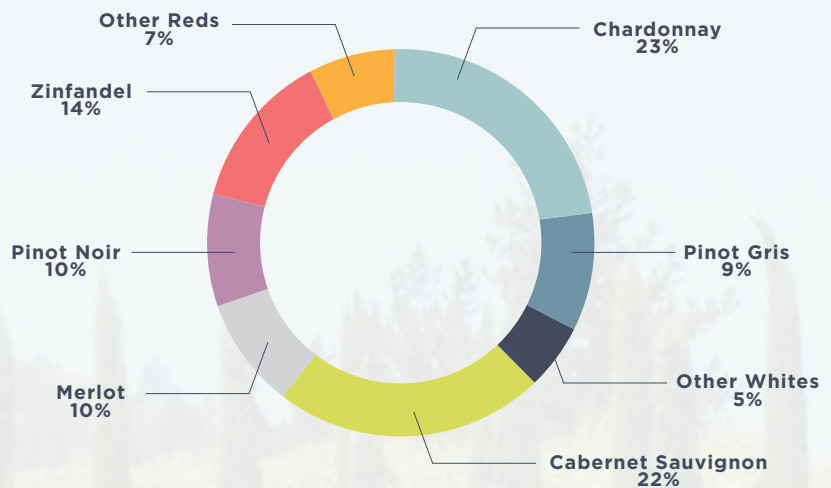
- C Lodi

CENTRAL COAST

- D Paso Robles

LABEL TIPS

MAJOR GRAPE VARIETIES



(Based on a 2017 crush report by California Department of Food & Agriculture)



California wine labels are almost identical to what you see on New Zealand wines and are fairly easy to navigate. In California, wine regions are determined based on geography and referred to as American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). New AVAs are requested all the time, so the number of them is constantly changing.

Fun Fact: the second AVA approved was Sonoma Valley in 1981.

85% of grapes must come from the AVA on the label. If no formal AVA is listed, and the wine instead says which county or state it's from, this drops to 75%.

75% of grapes varieties used to make the wine must be what's printed on the label.

95% of grapes must have been harvested during the vintage listed on the label.

REGIONAL FACTS



Spanish Influences

Spanish missionaries first brought vines to California in the 18th century, back when California was under Spanish rule. They used the grapes to make sacramental wine.



Prohibition

The California wine industry was booming, when Prohibition went into effect in 1920. It set the industry back decades as many winemakers ripped out their vines and switched to other professions. However, sacramental wine was legal during this time. In order to keep their doors open, several producers, such as Beringer, switched to making wine for the church. Some wineries also sold wine clandestinely. Patrons could ask for a “black chicken” at certain stores and receive a jug of wine in place of a chook. The law was abolished in 1933.



Judgement of Paris

In 1976, a wine writer held a blind wine tasting competition in which French producers went head-to-head with those from California. Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay from Napa Valley stole the show and beat out the French, putting California wines firmly on the world-stage for the first time.



Shifting Ground

The active San Andreas fault runs through California causing earthquakes and giving it unique geologic features. It's responsible for California's 30+ unique soil types and soaring mountain ranges. In fact, the Mayacamas Mountains that separate Sonoma from Napa Valley and the Vaca Mountains that protect Napa from the hot Central Valley, were both formed during the creation of the San Andreas fault.



Nuggets of Gold

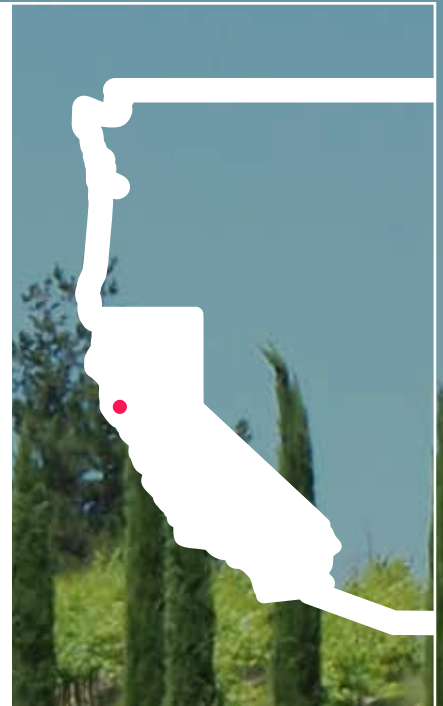
In the mid-1800s, prospectors from around the world came to California in search of gold. Some of these immigrants also started making wine, and the nascent wine industry started to grow and mature. In the 1860s, several of today's well-known wineries were founded such as Schramsberg, Beringer, and Charles Krug, California's first commercial winery.

SPARKLING

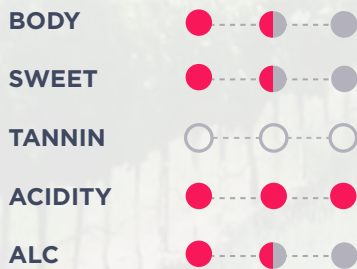
WHERE TO FIND THEM:

North Coast, with Anderson Valley and Carneros being two standout regions. Fun Fact: There are several Champagne houses making California fizz using Méthode Champenoise!

There is a wide range of sparkling wines produced in California. Some make it just like Prosecco and others use the same method as Champagne. Regardless, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier are primarily used to make these wines, along with other varieties like Chenin Blanc and Riesling.



SPARKLING WHITE



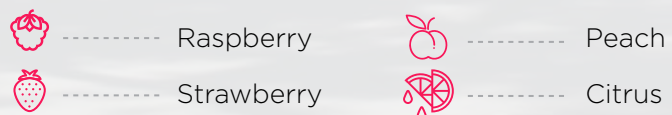
LOOK FOR



SPARKLING ROSÉ



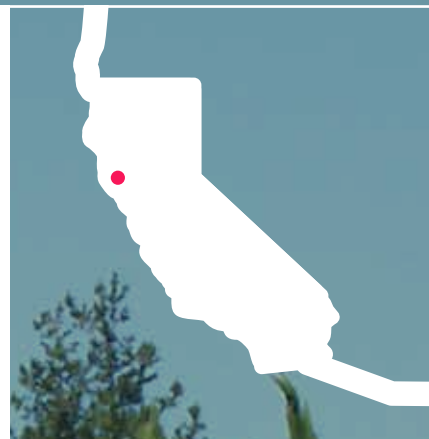
LOOK FOR



FRESH UNOAKED WHITES

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

North Coast, CA



PINOT GRIS

LOOK FOR



Apple



Citrus



Peach



Honeysuckle



CHARDONNAY

In recent years, California winemakers have been moving towards a more restrained style of Chardonnay, especially in Sonoma.

LOOK FOR



Green Apple



Peach



Mandarin



White Flowers

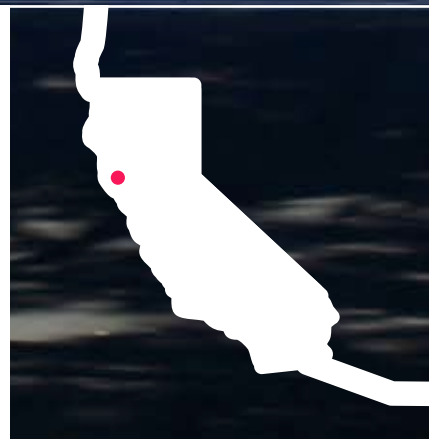


Candied Lemon

RICH OAKY WHITES

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

Everywhere! However, Napa Valley is well known for their award-winning, full-bodied Chardonnays.



CHARDONNAY



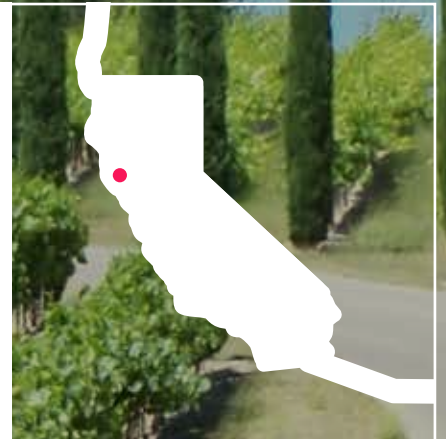
LOOK FOR



SOFT FRUITY REDS

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

Everywhere! However, Sonoma is known for its Pinot Noir, Lodi for its flavourful Zinfandels, and Paso Robles for its concentrated Grenache blends.



PINOT NOIR



LOOK FOR



GRENACHE



LOOK FOR



ZINFANDEL



LOOK FOR



Mixed Berries



Plum Jam



Baking Spice

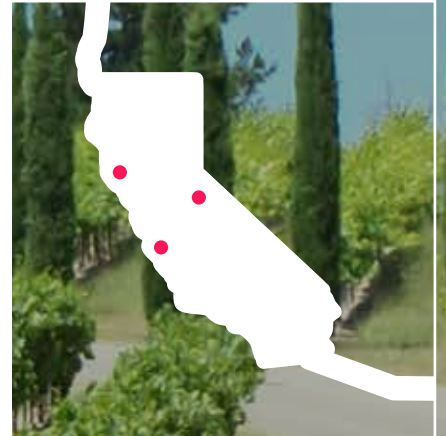


Vanilla

FRESH SPICY REDS

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

North Coast, Central Coast, Sierra Foothills



SYRAH

Wines from coastal and higher elevation regions tend towards fresher fruit flavours and more floral notes, such as Syrahs from Sonoma. Those from warmer, inland areas are fleshier, with jammy fruit flavours, like those from Napa Valley and Paso Robles.



LOOK FOR



Red Plum



Blueberry



Raspberry



Violets



Lavender



Pepper

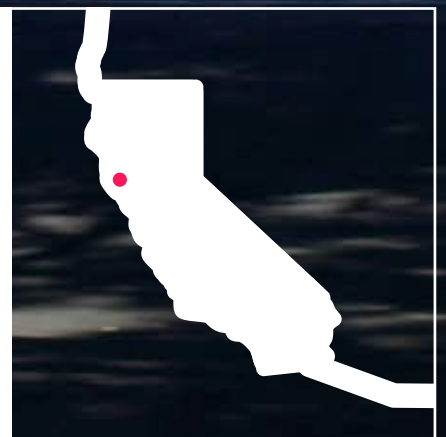


Leather

POWERFUL REDS

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

Everywhere! However, Sonoma and Napa Valley are the best-known regions for Powerful Reds.



CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wines from higher altitudes have firmer tannins and brighter fruit flavours than those from the warm valley floor, which tend to be smooth and jammy on the palate.



LOOK FOR



Blackberry



Cigar Box



Plum



Baking Spices



Black Currant



Mocha

MERLOT



LOOK FOR



Plum



Vanilla



Black Cherry



Dark Chocolate



Baking Spices