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Top Wineries in Napa Valley

BY ESTHER MOBLEY, JUNE 14, 2022



John Storey/Special to The Chronicle

As America's preeminent wine region, Napa Valley has perfected the art of wine tasting. The 500-odd wineries here know how to put on a great show for customers, with reliably high-quality wines in ever more picturesque settings. Granted, a trip to Napa doesn't usually come cheap these days, and many top destinations now charge well over \$50 for tastings. But there are still plenty of secret bargains in Napa if you know where to look. And some of the pricier options justify their cost by offering especially memorable wines and elaborate experiences. This list represents our favorite Napa wineries to visit right now, in the summer of 2022. New additions to the guide since we first published it last summer include Keenan, Spottswoode, Storybook Mountain, Trefethen and Bouchaine. Whether looking for a place to bring a picnic and linger over a bottle, a guided tour through Napa history or a geek educational session, wine drinkers of all stripes will find something to love here. Whatever you do, do not show up unannounced: since the pandemic began, virtually all Napa Valley wineries have required reservations.



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A verdant, windswept gem in Carneros

There are two tasting rooms at Bouchaine, which claims to be the longest continually operating winery in Carneros, the south Napa area abutting San Pablo Bay. The first is an older, homier building that houses a modest tasting bar surrounded by colorful flower gardens and outdoor tables. Down here, the mood is casual and customers can order wine by the bottle and even bring their own picnic (something that's not permitted at every winery). Above the gardens, perched on a hill, is a newer addition: an eyecatching, semicircular visitor center completed in 2019. The protocol here is a little more formal, with guided, sit-down tastings and no outside food allowed No matter where you taste, though, you'll get to try well-crafted wines like Bouchaine's ethereal, floral Pinot Meunier—a Champagne grape that's rarely made into a still wine—and its crisp, honeyed Riesling. An assortment of Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs represent a range of styles, from lean and bright to bold and fruity, but don't expect to find any Cabernet here.