



CALIFORNIA-STYLE WINE COUNTRY RESTAURANTS & FARMERS' MARKETS *A Regional Focus on Enjoying the Artisan Food Trend with Local California Wines*

The popularity of California wine, fresh produce and regional cuisine continues to expand worldwide. For travelers to the state, one of the best ways to discover what's new in fresh seasonal cooking and dining is to visit California's wine country. Local restaurants focus on pairing regional wines with natural, farm-grown ingredients, often sourced from community farmers' markets. These markets reflect the abundance of produce available in the state, as California is America's top agricultural state, producing 350 plant and animal commodities.

There are more than 400 certified farmers' markets throughout California, many of them in the state's wine regions. A complete listing is available at <http://www.cafarmersmarkets.com>. Mirroring the growth in California wineries, California farmers' markets have continued to rise in popularity over the past three decades. Professional chefs shop alongside domestic consumers, looking for field-ripened fruits and vegetables, fragrant flowers, fresh fish, artisan breads and pastries, plus delicacies such as local olive oils and cheeses. Beginning in 2000, California wine can now be sold at qualified California Certified Farmers' Markets.

Restaurants and consumers alike are aware that more flavorful dishes can be created with heirloom vegetables and products, grown, raised or harvested with the same care that is put into their preparation. Food from local sources also travels from the farm to the plate in a timely manner. The freshness of the ingredients becomes part of the feature of the dish and supports the sustainable concept of "green dining" in that less fossil fuel is used to transport products from the farm to the kitchen.

Illustrating the allure of California's wine country and cuisine, five regional winery associations highlight popular restaurants and farmers' markets to visit within their locales. These attractions traverse California's wine and agricultural regions, from Central California's Paso Robles, north to Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, and beyond San Francisco to Lodi and Sonoma County.

LODI

Located within the Delta area east of San Francisco, Lodi has been a major winegrowing region since the 1850s. From wine and cherries to nuts and asparagus, Lodi is part of the San Joaquin Valley, the garden basket of California.

The 18-week Thursday night farmers' market hosted in downtown Lodi is not just for residents. Visitors and locals alike find locally grown, fresh produce, fruits, flowers and herbs at the Lodi farmers' market. School Street Bistro is known for being a local vintner hotspot. Winemakers catch up with friends and relatives over a glass of wine before heading to the market to pick up their supply of produce.

The chef at Wine & Roses Restaurant on the property of the historic Wine & Roses Inn prepares fresh seasonal cuisine highlighting the abundant agriculture of the Lodi region.

Another legend in Lodi, celebrating 50 years of producing seasonal fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers, is Phillips Farm; a staple for quality locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. Many first-time visitors are drawn to the farm stand for the café or the wine but return time and time again for the pie, made fresh in the café from fruit grown on the farm!

MONTEREY COUNTY

From five-star restaurants to award-winning wines, Monterey County is a gourmet food lovers' paradise. Endowed with the seafood bounty of the Monterey Bay, a cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables from the Salinas Valley, and the fine wines that flow from vineyards throughout the region, local chefs craft culinary masterpieces not easily forgotten. Wine-themed nights occur at several restaurants throughout the county. Tarp's Roadhouse celebrates "Wine-Down Wednesdays," Montrie hosts Half-Price wine nights each Sunday, and the Rio Grill adds a \$5 glass of a nightly wine feature onto the meal every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Sardine Factory's wine list, featuring over 30,000 bottles, has received ongoing recognition and shouldn't be missed. Christopher's Restaurant in Carmel is a must-stop for anyone wanting to explore Monterey County wines.

Fresh agriculture products and other gems of the area can be found at numerous farmers' markets conducted weekly throughout the county. Old Monterey Marketplace is the home each Tuesday afternoon for a Certified Farmer's Market and the Monterey Peninsula College's lower parking lot also boasts fresh produce and flowers each Thursday afternoon. A weekend market that features 60 vendors is available in Salinas every Saturday from June through mid-November.

PASO ROBLES

A trip to Paso Robles Wine Country would not be complete without tasting the culinary expertise in the region, where the best of California cuisine is paired with local Paso Robles wines. Bistro Laurent, Paris Dining with Andre and Panolivo restaurants feature a French influence in their menu offerings. California and Mediterranean inspired cuisine distinguishes Villa Creek, Matthews at the Airport, McPhees and Odyssey World Café. For those who love Italian-inspired foods, there is Buona Tavola. Deborah's Dining Room at Justin Winery is open nightly.

Paso Robles chefs are dedicated to using local, fresh ingredients and source many items at farmer's markets or from local, organic farms. Some chefs even use by-products from the vineyards and wineries to create marinades and smoked meats. From the vineyards to wineries and into the kitchens, Paso Robles is focused on sustainable programs to bring fresh, local foods and wines to residents and guests of this thriving community.

A Certified Farmers' Markets in the Paso Robles downtown city park fosters this rural connection on Tuesdays and Saturdays. A small, 50-acre organic family farm east of Paso Robles, Windrose Farm hosts a farm stand that gives guests the chance to hand pick veggies and fruits.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

In the Santa Cruz Mountains, there is a marriage of high quality wine, local produce, farmers' markets and exceptional cuisine. The combination makes for an extraordinary culinary experience. Many restaurants in the Santa Cruz Mountains follow "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" as part of their wizardry. Several with this focus are Theo's, in Soquel; Michaels on Main, in Soquel; Manressa, in Los Gatos; and Sent Sovi in Saratoga. Michael's on Main incorporates organic produce from local farms into their menu and even their desserts!

Sent Sovi in Saratoga is another well-known supporter of the farming community. “We use as many local products as possible. I try to source as much as I can from within 100 miles or so of the restaurant. There is a farmer in Sonoma who sends me ducks by UPS. Another just grows tomatoes during the summer. I want to bring that quality and passion to the table, along with a focus on local and smaller wineries. They go hand in hand,” said owner Josiah Sloan. Manressa Restaurant focuses on locally grown products, and finds a nice fit pairing them with regional wines. “Some of the finest wines produced in the Santa Cruz Mountains grace the tables at Manresa,” says chef David Kinch. “We are fortunate to have such a vital winegrowing region right in our own backyard.” Growers offer their products at Certified Farmer’s Markets in the town of Santa Cruz and nearby in Aptos, Felton and Watsonville on almost every day of the week. The central market in downtown Santa Cruz, at Lincoln and Cedar Streets, is held every Wednesday.

SONOMA COUNTY

Sonoma County is a dining paradise. It’s not only a premium winegrowing region, but also a prime diverse agricultural region, with artisan cheese makers, an array of small farmers and locally raised meats. The county’s restaurants feature the bounty of the region with fresh, local and often organic offerings. Sonoma lamb, salmon from Bodega Bay, and Petaluma duck appear on many restaurant menus, while dessert might feature succulent in-season peaches from Dry Creek Peach and Produce. For elegant upscale dining, restaurants such as Cyrus and Dry Creek Kitchen in Healdsburg, and Farmhouse Inn in Forestville, rival any in the country. Casual yet refined independent restaurants abound, with gems such as Zin, Ravenous, Manzanita, Ralph’s Bistro and Willi’s Seafood & Raw Bar within walking distance of Healdsburg’s town square. Sonoma offers Deuce, The Girl & the Fig, The General’s Daughter, Carneros Bistro, and La Sallette, among many others, while prime Santa Rosa offerings include Zazu, Syrah and Willi’s Wine Bar.

For a list of Sonoma County farmers’ markets, visit http://www.sonomacountry.com/visitors_ttd_orchards_dir.aspx

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