Napa Valley

HISTORY

Wild grapes were abundant in Napa Valley before George Calvert Yount built a homestead and began cultivating wine grapes in 1839. Charles Krug established the first commercial winery in 1861, and sparked a wave of growth that continued until a phylloxera outbreak knocked it back before Prohibition all but finished it. A slow rebound turned into a true renaissance when vintners in the 40's began working together, a camaraderie that culminated in the famed Paris Tasting of 1976.

GEOGRAPHY

This agricultural Eden is the result of a millennia of violent geological forces. The slow grinding of tectonic plates and dramatic volcanic events built a topography as varied as a quilt made from fabric scraps. Only 30 miles in length and five miles across, the land shifts from windswept estuary flats, through gently rolling hills, to towering, forested mountains. Soils of both volcanic and marine origin coexist to form a complex and astonishingly varied soil composition. Napa Valley contains half the world's soil orders and more than 100 soil variations. Each site and subregion in the valley has specific advantages and challenges that make it unique, both in soil and in climate.

CLIMATE

Napa Valley is a land of plenty between the cold Pacific Ocean and the occasionally scorching Central Valley, managing to combine the two extremes into a variety of climate conditions ideally suited to specific varietals. While the microclimates are distinctive and dramatic, the overall effect is Mediterranean, with a long, sunny growing season. .

GRAPES

Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay are the most widely planted varietals in the Napa Valley, but adventurous growers seem to find a microclimate or subregion suited to just about any grape. More than three dozen flourish in Napa Valley, with Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, and Zinfandel holding their own quite well. Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc are often included in Bordeaux-style blends, while Syrah, Petite Sirah, and Pinot Gris have had no trouble finding a niche of their own.

WINE CHARACTER

Napa Valley is a playground where winemakers can keep things classic or be boldly experimental. Ultimately, though, the region is synonymous with incredible Cabernet Sauvignon, whether bearing the opulent fruit-forwardness of the valley floor or the savory smoke from the mountains. The range within the varietal is as varied as the terroir, but quality is a constant and age-worthiness is almost assured.

Bordeaux, France

HISTORY

Pliny the Elder first wrote about the vines of Bordeaux in 71AD, but they were well established by then. In the Middle Ages, the wines of the region found their way to the English market and the world stage. The golden era in the 17th century brought such a vast spread of vineyards that an early appellation system was developed. Interestingly, the region was saved from the Phylloxera epidemic of 1875-1892 by grafting native vines onto pest-resistant American rootstock from Augusta Missouri!

GEOGRAPHY

The Gironde Estuary is the most critical geographic element in this region, effectively carving the area in two and dividing the wine growing regions into their Left Bank or Right Bank designations. The Left Bank is directly South of the Garonne River and encompasses the Medoc wine region. The soil here is rockier and packed with gravel and limestone. Vines here struggle for nutrients and develop those qualities that make for such age-worthy wines. The Right Bank lies to the North of the Dordogne River and is dominated by clay soils well suited to creating muscular, dense Merlot. Pomerol, with pride of place at the tributary where the rivers meet benefits from the best of both worlds with gravel and iron rich sandy clay.

CLIMATE

Located at the 45th parallel, Bordeaux enjoys a temperate, Mediterranean, maritime climate and mostly avoids extremes. Winters are mild and summers pleasantly sunny. Even the warmest summer days rarely hit triple-digits, and chill night air can be counted on for the acidity that gives Bordeaux such a unique fresh quality.

GRAPES

In Bordeaux, the “whole” is a whole lot more than the sum of its parts! Renowned for reds, whites, and even dessert wines, Bordeaux are all about the blend. Key grapes are the Cabernet Sauvignon of the Left Bank and the Merlot of the Right. Cabernet Franc typically plays a supporting role. Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon rule the whites, where the latter helps the former to reach new depths.

WINE CHARACTER

Right Bank Blends are led by Merlot and deliver licorice, chocolate, black cherry, spice and smoke, vanilla and jam. These low acidity lovelies are generally richer, softer, plusher and incredibly silky. Left Bank Bordeaux open with Cabernet Sauvignon and depths of blackberry, black cherry, black coffee and black licorice. Sense a theme? These wines are concentrated, powerful, and built for the long haul.

2014 Château de Pez Saint-Estéphe

APPELLATION:
Saint-Estéphe, Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel

VARIETALS:
51% Merlot, 44% Cabernet Sauvignon,
3% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc

VINEYARD:
Château de Pez

WINEMAKER:
Nicolas Glumineau

AGING:
Stored in barrels (40% in new wood, 40% in "Premier vin" casks and 20% in "Deuxième vin" casks) and racked every three months

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
Lamb Shank

ORDERING INFO:
1048453 | $59.95

DESCRIPTION:
Founded in the 15th century, Château de Pez in the oldest domaine in Saint-Estéphe, located on the inland plateau. The owners of Château Haut-Brion at the time gave Pez its vineyards, which were handed down through the generations until the French Revolution. The land was seized and sold, passing through many hands until it landed under the care of Champagne Louis Roederer. Today, it consists of 118 acres with 103 planted to vine, and is counted among the most highly reputed crus of the Médoc. The house is a believer in the power of well-integrated wood, and the wine is stored in a mix of new, once-used and twice-used barrels, racked every three months.

This is a beautifully intense Old World expression. It starts off with a mellow, lightly spicy nose with noted of fennel and cardamom. With a little time and air, dark, savory fruit appears, following through on the palate. This has had a nice rest and the dominate wood is settling down to play a lovely supporting role to the concentrated black fruits and graphite laced tannins, lifted by floral notes

2016 Sterling Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Calistoga

APPELLATION:
Calistoga

VARIETAL:
Cabernet Sauvignon

VINEYARD:
Sourced principally from the Frediani and Bear Flats Vineyards in Calistoga

WINEMAKER:
Harry Hansen

AGING:
19 months in oak barrels (55% new) from a variety of French, American and Hungarian coopers

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now through 2027

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
Aged English Cheddar

ORDERING INFO:
1044358 | $74.95

DESCRIPTION:
Sterling's original claim to fame was its aerial tram – in 1973 they aimed to be the only winery in the world to have one. It's still the only game in town if you'd like to be whisked straight up a mountain to a spectacular winery perched on top of a 300-foot wooded volcanic knoll above the valley floor. It's worth the trip; the views can't be beat and the wine waiting at the top is seriously delicious. As one of Napa's larger land owners, they can afford to produce quite a range. Three years after opening the tram, they locked down 320 acres of vines on Diamond Mountain. That special vineyard, called the Diamond Moutain Ranch, continues to deliver world-class fruit for Sterling's finest wines, including their Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

A royal shade of purple leads to a plush, generous, mouth-filling wine with aromas and flavors of red fruits alongside ripe wild blackberries, cola, a touch of maple syrup and caramel. Velvety tannins with evident oak spice and vanilla lead to a lingering finish. Enjoy today, with the likelihood the wine will grow ever more complex over the next five years.

2018 Château Marsau
Francs Côtes de Bordeaux

APPELLATION:
Côtes de Bordeaux

VARIETAL:
Merlot

VINEYARD:
Marsau

WINEMAKER:
Anne-Laurence Chadronnier

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
French Style Roast Chicken

ORDERING INFO:
1046281 | $49.95

DESCRIPTION:

Château Marsau is a love story written by two people with a passion for wine and poetic souls. Anne-Laurence is a winemaker from Brittany with an endless curiosity about the magic of wine and everything that happens between the soil and the glass, guided by human hands. Mathieu is a seller of wine, driven by his own curiosity about wines from around the world and what they say about their cultures of origin and their place on a table. The pair dreamed up this winery in a place they discovered while walking along the Dordogne valley, crossing the vineyards of the right bank. The air was pure and silent, the landscape harmonious, rural simplicity. So the story began.

Dark in color and generous in aromas, this opens with ripe damson plum wrapped in vanilla and some very subtle hints of thyme. In the mouth, the wine is warm and plush, loaded with deep fruit flavors that slowly give way to a beautifully floral mid-palate. A judicious use of oak brings in some delicate notes of chocolate, clove, and a bit of toast on the finish. The silken tannins melt onto the palate of this satisfying, age worthy Cab.

2018 Stags' Leap Winery Merlot Napa Valley

APPELLATION:
Napa Valley

VARIETAL:
98% Merlot, 2% Petite Sirah

VINEYARDS:
Various

WINEMAKER:
Christophe Paubert

AGING:
19 months in 100% French oak barrels, 35% new

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
Porchetta

ORDERING INFO:
1045217 | $34.95

DESCRIPTION:
Stags' Leap is a producer that should need no introduction, having been founded in the late 1880's on the watershed of the Stags Leap Palisades. Erosion from those palisades is the source of the volcanic soil that plays such a critical role in the character of the Cabernet Sauvignon from this district. Just a few short miles north of the city of Napa, the property boasts a unique terroir and ideal microclimate for classic California winemaking. From hand-picked and hand-sorted fruit to the oak barrels aging in mountain caves, this producer honors the traditions of the industry – time honored and simple, if not easily accomplished. Hard work and a delicate hand yield authentic wines of timeless class and authenticity.

From the picture perfect 2018 vintage comes a beautiful example of Napa Valley Merlot, with exuberant dark fruit aromas and a medium to full-body. Briary black cherry greets the nose with a complement of allspice and ginger. The palate is rich with rounded tannins and a soft, approachable structure. Flavors of cassis and hazelnut are wrapped in sweet oak spice and dark espresso notes, which linger on the finish.

2019 Chappellet 'Mountain Cuvee' Proprietary Red Napa Valley

APPELLATION:
Napa Valley

VARIETAL:
44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 9% Petit Verdot, 7% Malbec, 4% Cabernet Franc

VINEYARDS:
Various

WINEMAKER:
Phillip Corallo-Titus

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
Grilled Meats

ORDERING INFO:
1045321 | $39.95

DESCRIPTION:
If you asked us for our list of Napa Valley wineries making the highest quality, most complete, most consistent, most interesting, most age-worthy wines, Chappellet Winery would be at the top. Consider all the metrics: track record, intrinsic quality, taste of the terroir, availability, quality-price rapport, freshness, and visceral excitement. This could be the finest winery, top-to-bottom, in the Napa Valley, and it's easy to see what makes the wines so good. First, take a great terroir: volcanic terraces high on Pritchard Hill that were first planted in 1882. It's no accident that Colgin, Continuum, and Bryant Family set up shop in the same neighborhood. Then we have 47 years of accumulated knowledge from some of the best winemaking talent the valley has ever seen. And, finally, there's the huge Chappellet family, dedicated as a team to farm great grapes and make superb wines since 1968.

This alluring Bordeaux-varietal blend displays aromas of concentrated fruit and spice, with layers of red currant, cassis, cinnamon, vanilla and clove, as well as hints of earthy forest floor, wild sage and sweet toasty oak. On the palate, plush, impeccably balanced tannins carry the lush red and black fruit flavors to an elegant, lingering finish.

2019 Château Cissac
Haut Médoc

APPELLATION:
Haut-Médoc, Cru Bourgeois Supérieur

VARIETAL:
58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 8% Petit Verdot

VINEYARD:
The Château Cissac vines are situated on a plateau with a soil composed of gravel deposits from the Garonne River. It is located at an altitude of 27.5 m, equivalent to the highest points of the neighbouring appellations, Saint-Estèphe and Pauillac.

WINEMAKER:
Laurent Saint Pasteur

AGING:
14-16 months in 30% new wood

BEST FROM:
Enjoy now through 2032

ULTIMATE FOOD PAIRING:
Venison

ORDERING INFO:
1046356 | $39.95

DESCRIPTION:
Château Cissac is located in the heart of the Medoc, on the remains of an ancient Roman villa. The vineyards enjoy exceptional terroir adjoining the prestigious Saint-Estèphe and Pauillac appellations, with soil of sandy gravel over clay and limestone. In keeping with Medoc tradition, the vineyards are planted mainly to Cabernet Sauvignon, which has proven so well-suited to the land in Cissac. The core principles of the estate, governed and run by Marie Vialard, are to respect the demands of the climate, the particularities of the terroir, the nature of the fruit and the long-standing traditions of world-class winemaking, all while embracing innovations that will protect the land for future generations.

2019 was an excellent vintage, despite the lower yields. The Cissac terroir delivers a taut, fresh wine with lovely, ripe tannins. The opening aromas sing of ripe, black fruit framed discreetly in wood. Velvety and powerful in the mouth, with rich concentration, the finish is long and lovely. The balance overall is tremendous, with elegant structure that shows a lot of promise for long-term ageworthiness.