

# Alexander Valley

## HISTORY

The Alexander Valley was prized territory for cows and wheat long before it became a grape-grower (and wine-lover) paradise. In the 1950's, the Asti Winery (founded by an Italian immigrant in 1881) was California's second most popular tourist destination, beat out for first place only by Disneyland. Today, the magnificent valley is home to some of the finest Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay vines in the world.

## GEOGRAPHY

The Alexander Valley flanks the Russian River, encompassing a watershed that runs southeast from the Mendocino County line until it smacks into Chalk Hill. The AVA embraces mountain vineyards where the grapes can rise above the fog and visitors can enjoy million-dollar views. Dramatic, west-facing hillsides on the Mayacamas Mountain range provide well-draining soils and loads of sunshine.

Benchland slopes with rich, balanced soils bring their own unique character and intense aromas. On the valley floor, the river's path as it ebbed and flowed over millennia, has left behind gravel deposits beneath alluvial soil. By and large similar to the finest vineyard soils of Bordeaux, this mix has also proven especially well-suited to growing great Cabernet Sauvignon.

Altogether, it's a masterful palette for a winemaker.

## CLIMATE

The area is sheltered from the influence of the Pacific Ocean thanks to some low-lying hills northeast of Healdsburg, but the Russian River does manage to pull in some early morning fog to blanket the lower vineyard areas. This can be one of the warmest areas in Northern California during the day, but big temperature drops in the evening offer a little cool climate salvation.

## GRAPES

Cabernet reigns supreme in the Alexander Valley, bolstered by the well-drained, gravelly soils and warm, arid regions of Sonoma County's warmest AVA. Merlot also dominates among reds, particularly in the mountain sites, flanked by other Bordeaux varietals. Chardonnay, that ever adaptable white, also thrives in the region, finding a unique expression from the warmer days and well-draining soils.

## WINE CHARACTER

Some of America's most loved Cabernets begin in the Alexander Valley. Deep and dark in color with bold tannin structure and relatively high acid, characteristics can vary from site to site but tend towards expressions of black fruit and dry herbs. Dusty, dry, and elegant, the region produces seriously age-worthy wine. In Chardonnay, you'll find warm, tropical notes and a soft, elegant acid structure.

