

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

STORE HOURS



A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-7pm
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

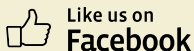
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Arroyo Seco

Understated Excellence



Monterey County's Arroyo Seco AVA doesn't seem to get the attention it deserves. It doesn't have the recognition of its growing area neighbor to the north, the Santa Lucia Highlands, nor the storied history of its neighbor to the east, Chalone. But for decades, Arroyo Seco has produced high-quality fruit and this AVA has its own alluring, unique characteristics.

The AVA gets its name from the Arroyo Seco Creek, which passes through the center of the area, draining rainfall from the Santa Lucia Mountains to the Salinas River. And despite the name, the creek is not always dry, although the area is generally arid with well-drained, nutrient-poor soils. Although Arroyo Seco is located adjacent to the Salinas Valley, it does not escape the frequent coastal winds and fog. However, a unique characteristic of the growing area is the presence of large stones in the soils which

absorb heat from afternoon sunshine and provide this additional heat to the vines. Local growers have affectionately named them: "Greenfield Pebbles."

The AVA is actually relatively small at 18,000 acres, with around half of those acres planted with grape vines. By comparison, the Santa Lucia Highlands is larger, at 22,000 acres. Although small and not overly well-known, the growing area's uniqueness has been recognized for some time. As of April 2016, the AVA is celebrating 33 years as a designated AVA, making it one of the state's oldest.

The AVA is divided into four general areas of terrain, referred to as the Gorge, the Ancient Riverbed, the Western Bench, and the Southern Benchland.

The Gorge

The westernmost sub-area of the AVA is a narrow ravine located at the base of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The terrain is steep and the soil is thin and rocky. This is a very challenging area to grow wine grapes, but the results, when successful, are outstanding. As this is the one area of the AVA partially protected from coastal influences, heat-loving varietals do well here, such as Rhône varietals.



The Ancient Riverbed

The Ancient Riverbed area of the AVA is the region directly adjacent to the creek bed, which essentially flows through the center of the AVA. This area experiences extreme coastal influences and is planted primarily with Chardonnay and Riesling, although there are pockets with other varietals. One notable exception is the famed Griva Vineyard, which is primarily planted with these two varietals, yet has around 40 acres dedicated to highly-regarded Sauvignon Blanc.



The Western Bench

The Western Bench area actually looks like it sounds – as a pronounced bench rising dramatically above the depression formed by the creek in the Ancient Riverbed area. As it is located directly adjacent to the Santa Lucia Highlands, it's not surprising that this is an area primarily planted with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir vines.

The Southern Benchland

The southern side of the Ancient Riverbed is visibly distinguishable as another bench area, although not as extreme as the Western Bench. The soils *Continued Inside*

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

MUIRWOOD - 2014 Chardonnay



The Muirwood Chardonnay is handcrafted from grapes grown on their Zanetta Vineyard located in the Arroyo Seco appellation of Monterey County. Unique vineyard conditions, which extend the growing season, result in wines with bright acidity and generous tropical and citrus fruit flavors. Barrel fermentation and ten months sur lie aging enhance the complexity and depth of this memorable Chardonnay.

For the Muirwood collection, their winemaker selects the finest fruit, and then handcrafts the wine with extraordinary attention and care to produce distinctive wines with great nuance and depth.

100% Chardonnay

13.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

PESSAGNO - 2013 Central Avenue Pinot Noir



Pessagno Winery fulfills a twenty-year dream to produce limited quantities of exclusive luxury wines from prestigious single vineyards throughout Monterey and San Benito Counties. The winery is known for creating wines of distinct character and elegance. It will forever prosper as one of California's finest wine sources.

In October of 2014, Pessagno Winery shifted over to the local Francioni family. Ray Francioni, a third generation Monterey County farmer, shares Pessagno's enthusiasm for luxurious wines. Ray started primarily as a farmer and grape grower. Over time, the Francionis earned the reputation of providing the finest grapes to some of the industry's best known producers. As a result, Ray decided to become involved first hand in the winery business.

Beautiful aromas of violets and red cherry greet the senses. The palate is rewarded with smooth flavors of strawberry and red cherry. The soft tannins make this wine very approachable. A very versatile wine that pairs with many foods, great with salmon, duck, lamb or a juicy cheeseburger.

100% Pinot Noir

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

MUIRWOOD - 2014 Merlot (Club Red)



Muirwood is a line of limited production, reserve quality wines grown, produced and bottled from Arroyo Seco Vineyards along California's Central Coast. Located in the premium grape-growing appellations of Monterey and Arroyo Seco, these vineyards yield intense, full-flavored fruit of exceptional quality. For the Muirwood collection, the winemaker selects the finest fruit, and then handcrafts the wine with extraordinary attention and care to produce distinctive wines with great nuance and depth. It is the best the winery has to offer.

The Muirwood Merlot blends the unique characteristics of several vineyards to create a distinctive and exceptional wine. Grapes from their Los Lobos vineyard in southern Monterey County, where warm days and cool nights prevail, enhance the wine's tannin and structure, while temperate days and cool nights at Suter Ranch in the Arroyo Seco lend color intensity and red berry aromas

100% Merlot

13.3% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2019

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

BERNARDUS - 2014 Griva Sauvignon Blanc (Club Blanc)



For 2014, Bernardus has chosen to bottle only grapes from the Griva Sauvignon Blanc vineyard. Michael Griva has planted a special block of the celebrated "Musque" clone of Sauvignon Blanc uniquely for Bernardus. It is widely recognized as the most expressive clone of Sauvignon Blanc. With its perfect combination of sandy, well-drained soils and a warm, breezy climate, Michael's vineyard has proven to be the ideal place to grow Sauvignon Blanc. All of their grapes are hand-picked during many successive pickings at various ripeness levels in order to have a broad palette of flavors and acidity levels from which to create the final blend.

The 2014 Griva Sauvignon Blanc exhibits notes of ripe tropical fruits, grapefruit and melon. On the palate, the flavors are full and rich, showing complex essences of lime, grapefruit and gooseberry. A bit softer than Bernardus' Signature bottling, it nonetheless exhibits a crisp, refreshing acidity.

100% Sauvignon Blanc

14.8% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

here are more fertile than in the rest of the AVA, and for this reason this is an area with more varied varietals, such as plantings of Albariño, Grenache, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Although there clearly are other varietals planted in Arroyo Seco, it's estimated that 80% of the fruit produced in the AVA is Chardonnay. Chardonnay from Arroyo Seco has been sought after since wineries such as Wente and J.Lohr first started planting it in Arroyo Seco. Along with these two out-of-towner wineries and others such as Cobblestone and La Crema, there are some Monterey County wineries sourcing their wines from Arroyo Seco grapes, including: Bernardus, Mercy Vineyards, Chesebro, and Carmel Road. Ventana has also always maintained a strong Arroyo Seco presence, sourcing their Chardonnays and Rhône varietals from here.

And speaking of Ventana, it's the AVA's only tasting room. Although, as mentioned earlier, the AVA is just south of the Santa Lucia Highlands, offering plenty of tasting room options in the general vicinity.

So while Arroyo Seco may not receive the attention or notoriety, it has been a constant provider of high quality wine grapes for Monterey County for over 30 years. And while Chardonnay has been an Arroyo Seco staple, as wine grape growing and wine making techniques change with time, we expect to see more small pockets of other varietals popping up in this unique Monterey County AVA.

Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula."



VISITING Varietals



SAUVIGNON BLANC

Pronunciation: SOH-vihn-yohn BLAHN

Sauvignon Blanc is a white wine that owes much of its popularity to winemakers in Bordeaux and the Loire Valley in France. The Sauvignon Blanc taste is very different from other white wines, like Chardonnay, because of its green and herbaceous flavors. The name Sauvignon Blanc means "Wild White" and the grape is related to Traminer with origins in the South of France. Sauvignon Blanc is one of the most widely planted wine grapes in the world and because of this it has a wide range of styles and flavors. Below we will investigate the fundamentals of its taste, learn the regions where its produced and get a few creative ideas for food pairings.

Most Sauvignon Blanc wines are made completely dry, although a few producers in regions like New Zealand and California have been known to leave a gram or two of residual sugar to add a richer texture.

The primary fruit flavors of Sauvignon Blanc are lime, green apple, passion fruit and white peach. Depending on how ripe the grapes are when the wine is made, the flavor will range from zesty lime to flowery peach. What makes Sauvignon Blanc unique from other white wines are its other herbaceous flavors like bell pepper, jalapeño, gooseberry and grass. These flavors come from aromatic compounds called pyrazines and are the secret to Sauvignon Blanc's taste.

Meat Pairings - White meats including Chicken, Pork Chop and Turkey. Fish including Tilapia, Sea Bass, Perch, Sole, Haddock, Trout, Cod, Redfish, Halibut, Snapper, Mussels, Crab, Lobster, and Clams.

Spices and Herbs - Green herbs including Parsley, Basil, Mint, Tarragon, Thyme, Fennel, Dill, Chives, and Rosemary. Spices including White Pepper, Coriander, Fennel, Turmeric, and Saffron.

Cheese Pairings - Look for softer more briny and sour cheeses like Goat's milk cheese, Yogurt, and Crème fraîche.

RECIPE

Fettuccine with Shiitakes and Asparagus

Ingredients

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 3 tablespoons | olive oil, divided |
| 1 bunch | asparagus, trimmed, cut into 2" pieces |
| | Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper |
| 2 tablespoons | unsalted butter |
| 8 oz. | shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps sliced |
| 1 small | shallot, finely chopped |
| 1 teaspoon | chopped fresh oregano |
| 1 teaspoon | chopped fresh thyme |
| 12 oz. | dried or 1 lb. fresh fettuccine |
| 3 oz. | Parmesan, grated (about ¾ cup) |
| 4 large | egg yolks |

Directions

Heat 2 Tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

Heat butter and remaining 1 Tbsp. oil in same skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, season with salt and pepper, and cook, tossing often, until tender, about 5 minutes. Add shallot and cook, tossing occasionally, until softened, about 2 minutes. Toss in oregano, thyme, and asparagus.

Meanwhile, cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water, stirring occasionally, until al dente. Drain, reserving 1 cup pasta cooking liquid.

Add pasta, ½ cup pasta cooking liquid, and 3 oz. Parmesan to skillet. Cook, tossing and adding more pasta cooking liquid as needed, until sauce coats pasta, about 2 minutes; season with salt and pepper.

Divide pasta among plates and top each with yolks and more Parmesan.

Serves 4

CHEESE

Varietals



ROQUEFORT

Pronunciation: Roke-e-fore

One of the great blue cheeses of the world, Roquefort Cheese is a raw sheep's milk cheese made in the south of France, and characterized by its distinct green-blue veins. Legend has it that Roquefort, once called the "King of Cheese", was discovered when a shepherd, who was having a meal of bread and sheep's milk cheese was distracted by a beautiful maiden and left his meal in the Combalou caves of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon. Upon his return he discovered the cheese covered in mold. Bravely, he tasted it and it was delicious! Thus, the discovery of Roquefort Cheese.

Roquefort was first mentioned in historical writings by Pliny the Elder in 79 AD who praised this original French blue cheese. In the 15th century, Charles VI gave the village of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon exclusive production rights of the cheese.

Roquefort Cheese is made by adding Penicillium Roqueforti spores to the curd during the cheese making process. This particular strain of healthy, edible mold was discovered long ago in the Combalou Caves, the same caves where Roquefort Cheese is set to age today.








Roquefort Cheese is white, soft, crumbly, and rindless. Its distinctive blue-green veins provide a sharp tanginess to create a well-balanced complex, creaminess and a range of sweet, smoky and salty flavors. The cheese is best when eaten at room temperature and delicious when served with figs and nuts, or a piece of crusty French bread and a glass of sweet wine. Crumble Roquefort Cheese over pizza, salads, or pasta, or blend into dressings or dips.

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|  | Muirwood 2014 Merlot | \$20.00 | \$15.00 | \$16.00 |
|  | Bernardus 2014 Griva Sauvignon Blanc | \$22.00 | \$16.50 | \$17.60 |
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