

# WINEROAD

SONOMA Co

## AVA INFORMATION

### ALEXANDER VALLEY

This valley is named for 19th-Century pioneer Cyrus Alexander, explorer of Northern Sonoma County and resident of the area. Flanking the Russian River from Cloverdale to Healdsburg along heavily grveled bench lands are world-class Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. Considered one of the most diverse grape-growing regions in California, varieties including Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc also prosper on the long, undulating valley floor and hillsides.

Forty years ago, prunes and walnuts reigned supreme in the Alexander Valley, and the flatlands were dotted with bovine herds. Today, the lowlands produce Chardonnays that achieve a rich and flavorful ripeness. The warmer northern end of the valley favors Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Merlot and newcomers such as French Syrah and Italian Sangiovese. Vineyards that scale the hillsides surrounding the valley floor provide fruit with deep and complex flavors. Hunt around and you can also still find some of the most succulent prunes you've ever tasted.

**Total acres: 76,900 • Vineyard acres: 15,000 • Number of wineries: 49, growing 23 different grape varieties**

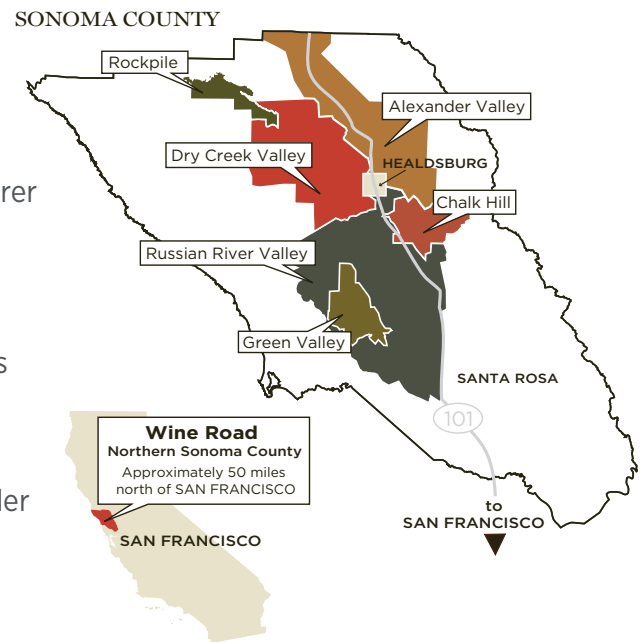
### DRY CREEK VALLEY

In many ways, Dry Creek Valley is quintessentially Sonoma County--where warm days are tempered by morning fog from the Pacific and food-friendly varieties like Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel boldly emerge, both on the narrow valley floor and the wooded hillsides above.

Originally planted by French immigrants in 1870, Italian pioneers soon discovered a geography that was reminiscent of their native Tuscany and Piedmont. They planted Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, and Carignane to produce hearty red wines. Today, the leading varieties, after Zinfandel, include Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Merlot. The severe, stone-strewn soils are ideal for concentrated fruit and flavor characteristics, creating wines that are truly representational of the land.

The aptly named Rockpile AVA emerged from the northern tip of Dry Creek Valley in 2002. Known for its warm and sunny climate, and named for its rough and unrelenting terrain, this area cultivates rich Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Total acres: 78,387 • Vineyard acres: 8876 • Number of wineries: 81, growing 26 different grape varieties**



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### RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

The Russian River Valley's climate is what makes it notable. This low-lying flat plain extends south and west of Healdsburg as it winds its way along the Russian River and descends to meet the Pacific at Jenner, then makes its way toward the Golden Gate Bridge, ending about 55 miles north of this landmark. This area thrives due to the coastal influences of the Pacific Ocean, which makes it an exceptional place for growing cool-climate grapes like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The Russian River Valley is so expansive it has two smaller appellations: Green Valley and Chalk Hill. Green Valley is one of the smallest appellations in Sonoma County and is nestled in the southwest corner of the Russian River Valley. This area is greatly affected by the cooling coastal elements, which benefits the cool-climate grapes that flourish in these conditions. Chalk Hill, named for the volcanic soil that makes up the area, is a unique little gem known for its outstanding varietals. Situated in the northeast corner, it is afforded warmer temperatures, which allow whites to thrive along with Cabernet Sauvignon. Russian River Valley Chardonnays are exceptional, being slightly more lean and refined than those of Alexander Valley, but the fruit is still developed enough to sustain months in oak barrels creating depth and complexity. The area is also internationally renowned for its Pinot Noirs. Multiple sub AVA's with distinct soils and micro-climates allow for a diversity of flavor and styles. Warm days bracketed by cool foggy mornings and nights allow the delicate fruit to mature and develop in complexity while maintaining delicacy and acidity.

**Total acres: 126,600 • Vineyard acres: 15,000+ • Number of wineries: 101 growing 30 different grape varietals**

