

Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Country Fact Sheet

"The world's best wine. Yes, you read right: world's best. As in, unsurpassed. Number one. Top dog. Top-of-the-world wine, with a top-of-the-world view: We pronounce it a perfect pairing." Sara Schneider and Lisa Taggart, SUNSET Magazine

"Santa Cruz Mountains have low profile, but some of state's best wine." San Francisco Chronicle, 2/28/10

The Santa Cruz Mountains has played a pivotal role in the history of winemaking in California, with roots going back over 100 years, and including well-known winemakers such as Paul Masson, Martin Ray, David Bennion (Ridge), David Bruce and others. The appellation has seen significant growth and change since the start of the 21st century: in the space of a few years the number of wineries has grown from 40 to now over 90, and vineyards are proliferating.

The precedence set by these legendary figures, along with best and sustainable practices in the vineyards and wineries, can be tasted today in our world-class wines.

Mountain Appellation. Recognized as an AVA in 1981, the Santa Cruz Mountains Appellation was among the first to be defined by its **mountain topography**, following the fog line along the coast to encompass our highest vineyards on the ridgetops at 2600'+ elevation. Our vineyards and wineries and the wines they produce reflect this mountain terrain, and their proximity to the ocean and the resulting maritime climate.

The Santa Cruz Mountains is not included in the Central Coast AVA. As published by the GPO when the Central Coast AVA was approved in 1985: The Central Coast viticultural area is located in the following California counties: Monterey, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco, (etc.) **The Santa Cruz Mountains viticultural area is excluded.**

The appellation is characterized by **intimate, artisan wineries** tucked in among the trees along beautiful mountain roads, or perched atop the ridges with dramatic views into the valleys or along the coast. Visitors can meet with and talk with the winemakers and enjoy exploring the mountain and coastal ambience and little towns. Wine tasting here is as much a discovery of the natural beauty of the mountains as it is a delightful discovery of our world-class wines. Visitors can taste at several nearby wineries in a day, and drive from the mountaintops (where it snows in winter!) to the coast and enjoy a sunset walk on the beach!

Microclimates. The mountain terrain creates myriad diverse **microclimates**. Generally it is warm on the eastern (inland) side where Zinfandel, Cabernet, and Merlot predominate; and on the coastal side and ridgetops, cooled by ocean breezes and fog, where cooler climate varieties such as Pinot Noir are grown

For more information on the vineyards and sustainable viticulture: Viticulture Assn. of the Santa Cruz Mountains, www.vascm.org

For more information on the wineries: www.scmwa.com

Geography. The appellation encompasses some 408,000 acres, from Woodside in the north to Watsonville (Mount Madonna) in the south, some 60 miles as the crow flies and 100 miles to drive. Within this area are some **90+ wineries and over 200 small vineyards** totaling only app. 1500 acres of winegrapes, divided about ¼ evenly among Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, and 'other' varieties (most notably Merlot and Zinfandel). A single vineyard in some appellations has as much if not more acreage as we have in our entire appellation! Our winegrapes are rare and in demand.

Soils are varied (decomposed rock, clay, loam, limestone); an abundant mineral content often lends a fresh mineral character to the wines. The mountain range straddles the San Andreas fault, with the North American Plate on the east, and the Pacific Plate on the west.

The region is bordered and the climate moderated by **two bodies of water:** Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean in the west, and San Francisco Bay in the east.

Terroir. The small vineyards are surrounded by native vegetation of chaparral, oak, redwood, madrone, and more. All this contributes to a distinctive flavor profile for Pinot Noirs from the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Santa Cruz Mountains wines reflect our special mountain terroir and, notwithstanding the different varieties and winemakers, typically are known for their minerality and balanced acidity, their complex flavors and long finish, and their ability to age. The result is wine that pairs particularly well with complementary foods, and age worthy wine that matures and improves in the bottle.

Viticulture. The region's vineyards and wineries actively support **sustainable** practices, including cover crops, erosion control, canopy management, solar, biodiesel. Since the first workshops in 2004 the region has seen an increase in the adoption of sustainable practices. Numerous vineyards grow organically, and several are certified **organic** by the CCOF.

