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2010 Official California Golf Publication



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Pebble Beach Resorts**

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TEE IT UP IN WINE COUNTRY

BY CORI BRETT

Nurturing fragile wine grapes to maturity is a measured process that can't be rushed, much like a smooth golf swing. Whether either is a skill that is learned or innate, golfers of discerning taste know all about the perfect pairing of fine wine and great golf that defines California.

When the Oscar-winning film "Sideways" premiered in fall 2004, Pinot Noir achieved almost cult-like status. Fans flocked to the wineries in Santa Barbara Wine Country and in the process, crowded out locals at the Hitching Post and other hot spots. Capitalizing on the popularity of grapes and golf in the region, one scene in the film was set at Alisal Guest Ranch, where the actors engaged in an unlikely brawl on the fairways. Originally a dude ranch operating within a 10,000-acre working cattle ranch, Alisal, eventually, built two golf courses to expand its recreational choices - The River

Course, a pleasant layout with wide fairways that occasionally border peaceful ranches where horses graze and the more challenging Ranch Course that only guests can play.

Alisal lies within the city limits of Solvang, the "Danish Capital of America," where wine bars like Wandering Dog pour for small production wineries lacking visitor facilities. With a motto of 'leave your leash behind,' it's the place to try something new, according to wine director di Vino Charles Williams.

Up the coast on the Monterey Peninsula, the acclaimed Pebble Beach gets all the attention, but don't bypass the Carmel Valley, where farms, nurseries, wineries and quality golf courses flourish in a gentler inland climate. Rancho Canada Golf Club provides a fun round of golf at either of its two public courses along the Carmel River. Quail Lodge Resort's classic course runs along the valley floor with a well-manicured look, reflected in the colorful landscaping of surrounding homes. As Quail Lodge President Lawson Little says of Carmel Valley, "We call it country, next to town on the sunny side of Carmel."

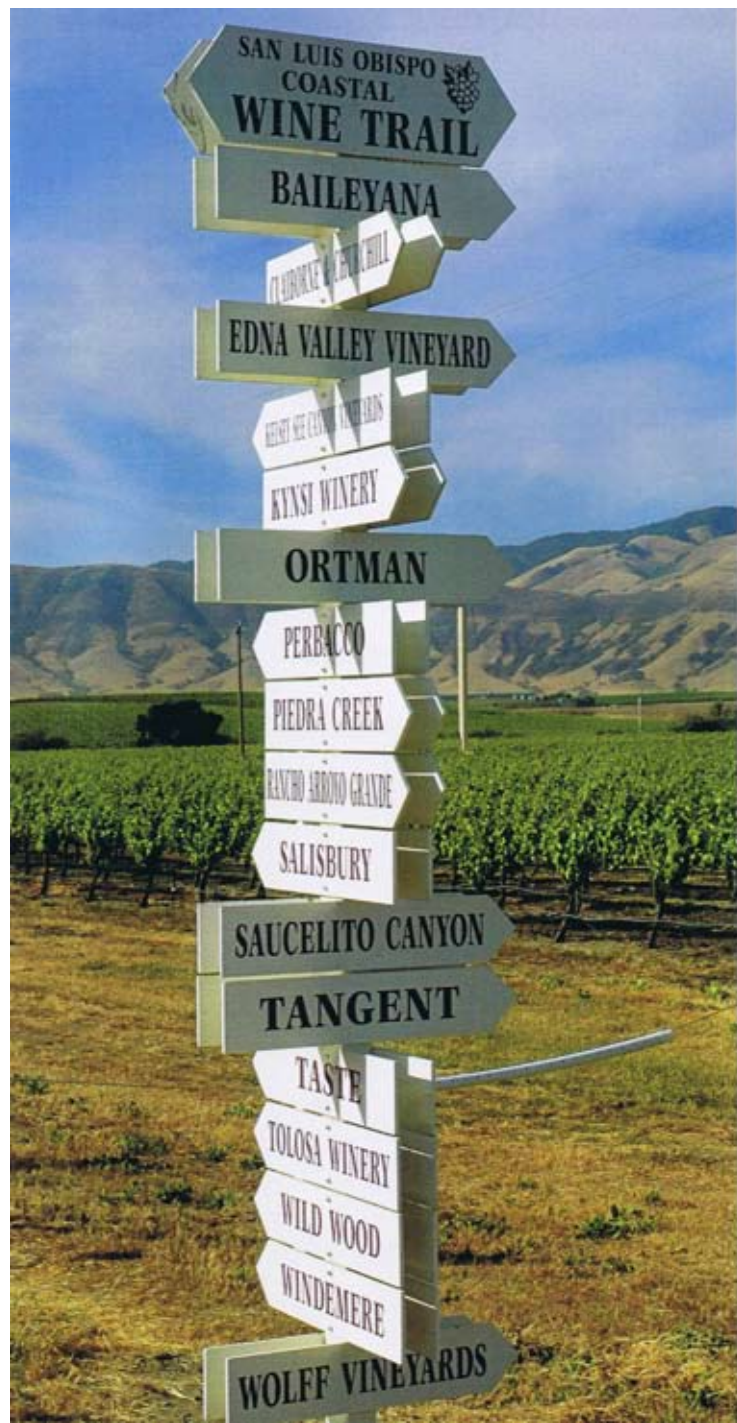
Eleven miles inland from Highway 1, several wine tasting rooms are clustered in Carmel Valley Village. Winemaker Walter Georis' intimate Corkscrew Bistro resembles a restaurant you might find in the French countryside with a tasting room adjoining the shaded backyard where bunches of fragrant fresh lavender stalks from the vineyard spill over the entrance table.

Akin to California's image, wine country fosters a laid-back lifestyle in tune with the seasons and rhythms of nature. This feeling is epitomized only an hour south of Los Angeles' snarled freeways where Temecula

Valley emerges as Southern California's premier wine region, thanks in part to golf legend Ely Callaway. Since he founded Callaway Winery in 1969, marking the beginning of winemaking in Temecula Valley, there are now close to 20 wineries. The fancy South Coast Winery Resort and Spa is the largest and has been named California State

Golden Bear Winery of the Year for the past two years.

Golf course architect Arthur Hills stamped his mark in Temecula with remote CrossCreek and the Journey at Pechanga, situated on historic lands of the Pechanga Tribe. Not far away, Temecula Creek Inn offers a relaxing getaway and 27 holes of golf.



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Vineyards blend beautifully with Chardonnay GC in Napa

In the best of both worlds, wine and golf co-exist on the same property. However, being connected with two of the most famous golfers to ever play the game is an added bonus. Such is the case at The Course at Wente Vineyards in the Livermore Valley, located in the San Francisco East Bay.

Here, player-vintner-architect Greg Norman designed the course so close to the vineyards that players are able to retrieve most errant golf shots. Sweeping views of the Livermore Valley are visible at the highest point on #10 tee box that is accessed via a steep, windy cart path, appropriately named Lombard Street.

Wente Vineyards, a community landmark with its award-winning golf, wine, restaurant and summer concerts has also partnered with LPGA legend,

Annika Sorenstam, to produce the inaugural vintage for her own wine label, Annika. The 2006 Syrah was uncorked in 2009.

Typically considered the mellow neighbor of glamorous Napa Valley, Sonoma County is home to many prestigious wineries, ranging from the state's oldest winery Buena Vista (1857), to innovative Benziger Family Winery, a leader in organic and biodynamic winegrowing practices. Located

in the heart of this wine Mecca, Sonoma Golf Club was designed in 1928 by Sam Whiting, architect of the Olympic Club's famed Lake Course (site of the 2012 U.S. Open). Considered a classic walking course with mountain and vineyard views, Sonoma GC is reserved for members and guests of Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa.

North Sonoma County spans a diverse region that includes wineries and golf courses on the

way to the rugged coast.

Architect Robert Trent Jones, Jr., recently renovated the Links at Bodega Harbour, where the front and back nines are like the difference between red and white wine. Another famous designer, Alister MacKenzie, carved narrow fairways lined with massive redwood trees that mandate accuracy on the beautiful nine-hole Northwood Golf Club in Nlonte Rio.

Jumping east just over the hills, both Highway 29 and the Silverado Trail run parallel through the Napa Valley, each flanked by wineries on both sides. This world famous grape region boasts more than 300 wineries, from boutique operations to large commercial producers. At Chardonnay Golf Club, 18 quality golf holes meander through 130 acres of Chardonnay and Merlot vineyards. Working vineyards

also border the neighboring Eagle Vines Golf Club, a Johnny Miller design.

Napa Valley's first fully-environmentally sustainable hotel, Gaia Napa Valley Hotel & Spa, is a welcome retreat from playing and tasting. Upon entrance, you'll quickly notice the whirring gauges behind the reception desk that constantly monitor the hotel's Co2 emissions, electricity and water use. Gaia's Restaurant menu reads: "Earth Friendly Dining," and the carefully selected wine list designates wines as "O" (organic farming), "B" (biodynamic farming), or "S" (sustainable farming).

In California's historic gold country, vintner Teena Wilkins of Vina Castellano says, "We're what Napa was 35 years ago." This family-owned winery, one of five comprising the Auburn Winery Trail, opened



in September 2009 and their wines have already won gold medals at prestigious competitions. The Trail runs near Auburn Valley Golf Club, a course with generous fairways at the base of Bald Mountain and partners on winemaker dinners. Somewhat unique to this Sierra foothills' winegrowing region is watching some of the customers arrive on horseback. Fawnridge Winery even installed a hitching post. Auburn Winery Trail members could very well be California's first horseback-friendly wineries.

However you choose to arrive at any of the hundreds of wineries throughout the Golden State, just remember, do not drink and drive unless you're on a golf course!•

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