

- Background and History
- California Wine Culture, Wine Laws and Varietals
- Classic Regions (outside of Napa!)
 - Santa Barbara
 - Santa Cruz
 - Lodi
 - Sonoma
 - Mendocino
 - Sierra Foothills

Background and History

- 9th century through 15th century: Vikings and Columbus arrive in America to native, wild American grapevines
- 1500s - 1800s: Colonists make wine with American grapes and *vitis vinifera*
- 1800s: Vines planted, wineries started in California
- 1920 - 1933: Prohibition
- 1966: Robert Mondavi creates his own brand
- 1976: Judgment of Paris
- 1980s: Rising prestige of Napa... and Robert Parker
- 1990s - today: Seeking identity and notion of terroir

California Wine Culture and Style

- Typically considered lumped together into one (very) big state...
- But each region has its own unique features, climate, style, vintage characteristics
- Still determining what grows best where; a very young industry
- Many new collaborations in last few years, sharing vineyards, winery facilities, ideas, people
- Overall very diverse, relaxed and willing to experiment

U.S. Quality System: American Viticultural Areas

- American Viticultural Area: an indication of geographical origin
 - 85% must be from stated AVA
 - 95% must be from stated vintage
 - 75% must be from stated varietal
 - Larger AVAs can be subdivided into smaller AVAs:
 - North Coast AVA → Napa Valley AVA → Rutherford AVA → individual vineyard



- Labeled by variety and place, but no real requirements for what must be planted/produced in a specific place

Central Coast: Santa Barbara

- “Central Coast” AVA runs all the way from San Francisco to Santa Barbara, covering a wide variety of climates and styles
- Santa Barbara has a maritime climate due to proximity of Pacific, and the longest growing season in CA
- Sub-AVAs of Santa Barbara County: Santa Maria Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, Sta. Rita Hills, Happy Canyon
- Pinot Noir and Chardonnay = top two varieties

Tasting Component:

Sandhi Chardonnay '10 – Santa Barbara, California

- Made by sommelier Rajat Parr (Michael Mina group), Charles Banks (former Screaming Eagle owner) and winemaker Sashi Moorman
- The Pursuit of Balance: seeking lower alcohol, more acidity, less oak influence, display of *terroir*
- Santa Barbara Chardonnay is sourced from sites in Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Ynez and Santa Maria

Central Coast: Santa Cruz

- Just 80 miles south of San Francisco
- Remote vineyards high in Santa Cruz mountains, up to 2,600 feet elevation
- Pacific Ocean to the west, San Francisco Bay to the north and east
- Cool climate due to proximity to coast, fog and elevation
- Locally identified sub-regions, but only one official sub-AVA: Ben Lomond Mountain

Tasting Component:

Bonny Doon Vin Gris de Cigare '11 – Santa Cruz, California

- Randall Graham is one of the most forward-thinking experimentalists in California (and perhaps all) wine
- Winery is called Bonny Doon Vineyard, though own vineyard was destroyed by Pierce's disease; now sources fruit from throughout central coast
- Cigare Volant is their flagship red wine, named for the cigar-shaped UFO that officials in Châteauneuf-du-Pape banned from landing in their vineyards in 1954; this is their rosé version
- Mostly Grenache lightly pressed and pulled quickly off skins, blended with Roussanne, Grenache Blanc and some Mourvèdre



Central Valley: Lodi

- Central Valley stretches from Sacramento down to Bakersfield
- Home to many bulk wineries
- The northern (much cooler) end is the Sacramento Delta
- Lodi is the highest quality AVA with seven sub-AVAs within it
 - Lodi known for very old vines, esp. Zinfandel

Tasting Component:

Scholium Project Marcher sur la Lune '08 – Lodi, California

- Winemaker Abe Schoener is a former philosophy professor; in his winemaking, he takes risks and asks questions
- Sources fruit from offbeat vineyards all over northern California
- This is young vine Verdelho (one of the grapes that makes Madeira) fermented in open barrels

Sonoma

- Expansive area between Napa (separated by the Mayacamas Mountains) and the Pacific
- Wide variations in temperature: from cool coastal sub-regions to very hot inland areas; valleys also bring in fog
 - Russian River Valley gets this fog via the Petaluma Gap
- Sub-AVAs of Sonoma County total 15 and include Russian River Valley, Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma Coast and part of Carneros
- Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah in cooler areas; Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot in warmer areas

Tasting Component:

Salinia W.E. Bottoms Pinot Noir '06 – Sonoma, California

- Winemaker Kevin Kelley, with his wife Jennifer, son Kian and dog Chase
- Kevin graduated from UC Davis before going to Burgundy to work with Domaine Meo-Camuzet and Domaine Henri Gouges; then worked with Wells Guthrie at Copain and made wine for Lioco before starting own label
- Main goal is to make wines that will age; uses cold climate grapes and almost no new oak
- “Salinia” is a reference to saline environment: only 10 miles from Pacific, on a prehistoric sea bed and strongly influenced by fog from ocean



Mendocino

- North of Sonoma, centered around Russian River and Navarro River
- Similar to Sonoma: wide variations in temperature based on altitude, proximity to coast and fog from valleys
- Sub-AVAs of Mendocino County total 11 and includes Anderson Valley, one of California's coldest
- Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Zinfandel plus cooler climate varieties like Riesling and Gewurztraminer; good amount of sparkling wine, too

Tasting Component:

Copain Tous Ensemble Syrah '10 – Mendocino, California

- Winemaker Wells Guthrie takes his inspiration from “old world” producers, particularly in the northern Rhône
- Seeks to make wines that are well balanced and food-friendly
- Sources fruit from a variety of vineyards in Mendocino
- *Tous Ensemble* means “all together” in reference to this being a blend

Sierra Foothills

- East of Sacramento in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains (Gold Rush country)
- Altitude is essential to provide cool temperatures; among the highest in CA
 - El Dorado vineyards are around 2,400 feet
- Five sub-AVAs of Sierra Foothills, including El Dorado
- Very old vines: some Zinfandel dates to before Prohibition

Tasting Component:

Donkey and Goat Five Thirteen '09 – El Dorado, California

- Owner/winemakers Jared and Tracy Brandt make extremely non-interventionist, “natural” wines in their urban winery in Berkeley
- No cultured yeasts, no chemicals, minimal sulfur, no plastic, no machines, no new oak, no stabilization
- Source fruit from sustainable growers around California
- Five Thirteen is a reference to the 13 grapes allowed in Châteauneuf-du-Pape; they use five of them here: Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, Counoise, Cinsault

