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The New Frontier of California Pinot Noir

Mendocino's Anderson Valley

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**TOURING & DINING IN
MENDOCINO COUNTY**

JUNE 15, 2013
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Scenic Goldeneye Winery, in Philo

A WINE AND FOOD TOUR OF MENDOCINO

Known for its laid-back atmosphere, this Northern California county offers an authentic experience // BY TIM FISH

In California wine country, Mendocino County stands proudly at the frontier. Not only is it the Golden State's most remote and northernmost wine region, its culture stands in contrast to its more well-known North Coast neighbors, Napa and Sonoma. Life moves at a slower pace in Mendocino, and the mind-set is sometimes

unconventional, even eccentric. That's what makes a tour of Mendocino all the more tempting. It won't be quite like any other wine region you've ever visited.

Located 100 miles north of San Francisco, Mendocino County terrain is rugged and mountainous. The landscape is striking, with the Coast Ranges covered in dense redwoods that rise up from the



The historic village of Mendocino

Pacific Coast. The population, as well as the grapevines and wineries, are located for the most part in the valleys and benchlands.

Mendo, as locals call it, has a distinctive vibe: a blend of artists, graying hippies and New Agers, fishermen, ranchers and farmers. Artisanal food producers are increasingly calling it home, and cutting-edge viticulture exists side by side with stubborn, old-school Italian growers who count every dime. About 25 percent of the vineyards are certified organic, and most of the 100-plus wineries are small and family-owned.

Because it isn't a well-oiled tourist mecca on the scale of Napa, Mendocino lodgings are generally small and intimate. Although the cuisine at the top restaurants will satisfy, the wine lists are generally limited and stocked with local wines.

Mendocino's unique charms all add up to what wine lovers seek on a trek through a wine region: an altogether new and authentic experience. What follows are a few of the highlights to help you on your way.

Wineries to Visit

BREGGO

11001 Highway 128, Boonville **Telephone** (707) 895-9589 **Website** www.breggo.com **Open** Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Cost** Tastings \$5; tours free

One of the newest wineries on the scene in Anderson Valley, Breggo opened in 2005 but has already made its mark with a consistent lineup of single-vineyard Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs. Winemaker Ryan Hodgins also makes aromatic and elegant bottlings of Anderson Valley Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. The small, modern tasting room, located between Boonville and Philo, has big

windows and a large porch, with comfortable Adirondack chairs from which to soak in the scenery. Breggo means "sheep" in Boontling, the insider dialect spoken by Anderson Valley locals.

—MaryAnn Worobiec

GOLDENEYE WINERY

9200 Highway 128, Philo **Telephone** (800) 208-0438 **Website** www.goldeneyewinery.com **Open** Daily, 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; tastings and tours by appointment **Cost** Tastings and tours \$10–\$30

This tasting room follows the successful formula founders Dan and Margaret Duckhorn employed for their Napa property—striking a balance between classy and comfortable. Like a large, airy living room, it has huge windows that showcase the view of the vineyards in back. That view is even better enjoyed from a perch outside on the patio, where there is plenty of seating. The focus here is on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and flights are served in sit-down tastings. Goldeneye also offers food-and-wine pairings, and a chance to check out several different single-vineyard bottlings.

—M.W.

HANDLEY CELLARS

3151 Highway 128, Philo **Telephone** (800) 733-3151 **Website** www.handleycellars.com **Open** May to October, daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; November to April, daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Cost** Tastings free

Milla Handley was a pioneer in Anderson Valley, founding her winery in 1982 and planting Pinot Noir in 1986. In addition to a consistently elegant Pinot, the Handley lineup includes reasonably priced Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. The tasting room is one of the most interesting in the area—decorated with the family's international folk art pieces and featuring the work of local artists, it exudes a cool, gallerylike vibe. There's also a shaded terrace and terrific views, as well as an extremely friendly staff.

—M.W.

VISITING MENDOCINO



WINERIES TO VISIT

- 1 BREGGO CELLARS**
11001 Highway 128, Boonville
- 2 GOLDENEYE WINERY**
9200 Highway 128, Philo
- 3 HANDLEY CELLARS**
3151 Highway 128, Philo
- 4 NAVARRO VINEYARDS**
5601 Highway 128, Philo
- 5 ROEDERER ESTATE**
4501 Highway 128, Philo
- 6 SARACINA VINEYARDS**
11684 S. Highway 101, Hopland
- 7 TOULOUSE VINEYARDS**
8001 Highway 128, Philo

OTHER LEADING WINERIES

- A EDMEADES WINERY**
- B FETZER VINEYARDS**
- C GRAZIANO FAMILY**
- D HUSCH VINEYARDS**

- E PARDUCCI WINERY**
- F SCHARFFENBERGER CELLARS**

RESTAURANTS

- 8 ALBION RIVER INN**
3790 N. Highway 1, Albion
- 9 THE APPLE FARM**
18501 Greenwood Road, Philo
- 10 CAFÉ BEAUJOLAIS**
961 Ukiah St., Mendocino
- 11 GOODLIFE CAFÉ & BAKERY**
10483 Lansing St., Mendocino
- 12 LEDFORD HOUSE**
3000 N. Highway 1, Albion
- 13 LIBBY'S RESTAURANT**
8651 Highway 128, Philo
- 14 MACCALLUM HOUSE RESTAURANT**
45020 Albion St., Mendocino
- 15 PATRONA**
130 W. Standley St., Ukiah
- 16 PAYSANNE**
14111 Highway 128, Boonville

- 17 PENNYROYAL FARM**
14930 Highway 128, Boonville
- 18 PIAZZA DE CAMPOVIDA**
13441 S. Highway 101, Hopland
- 19 TABLE 128**
Boonville Hotel, 14050 Highway 128, Boonville

HOTELS

- 20 ALBION RIVER INN**
3790 N. Highway 1, Albion
- 21 BOONVILLE HOTEL**
14050 Highway 128, Boonville
- 22 LITTLE RIVER INN**
7901 N. Highway 1, Little River
- 23 MACCALLUM HOUSE**
45020 Albion St., Mendocino

NAVARRO VINEYARDS

5601 Highway 128, Philo **Telephone** (800) 537-9463 **Website** www.navarrovine.com **Open** Daily, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; winter, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; tours by appointment **Cost** Tastings and tours free

If there is one must-visit tasting room on your trip to Anderson Valley, it's Navarro. One of the oldest and most successful wineries in the valley, it remains popular for good reason. Its roster of wines celebrates Mendocino's diversity, offering everything from Pinot Noir to Zinfandel on the red side and a spectrum of white wines that includes Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. Navarro's prices have always been affordable, and the tasting room is welcoming, with beautiful gardens, a dog run and plenty of places to picnic. The tasting room sells picnic supplies, including the local Pennyroyal Farm artisanal sheep and goat cheeses. —M.W.

ROEDERER ESTATE

4501 Highway 128, Philo **Telephone** (707) 895-2288 **Website** www.roedererestate.com **Open** Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; tours by appointment **Cost** Tastings \$6; tours free

Founded by Champagne house Louis Roederer, Roederer Estate is one of the top sparkling wine producers in the country, taking advantage of Anderson Valley's cool, foggy climate to produce elegant bubbly. The tasting room is modern and sophisticated, yet very comfortable, featuring couches in a loungelike atmosphere inside and an open terrace outside. Roederer offers flights of wines, including a chance to taste the same wine poured side by side from a standard size (750ml) bottle and a magnum, respectively. Picnicking is encouraged, so consider calling ahead to order the picnic for two that the winery prepares, which features a selection of cheese, salami and other treats from the local Boont Berry Farm. —M.W.

SARACINA VINEYARDS

11684 S. Highway 101, Hopland **Telephone** (707) 670-0199 **Website** www.saracina.com **Open** Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; tours by appointment **Cost** Tastings and tours \$5-\$15

The past and future of Mendocino meet here, in one of the newest and most modern tasting rooms in town. John Fetzer was at the helm of Fetzer Vineyards when it grew to be one of the largest wineries in California in the 1980s and 1990s. Fetzer has since been sold, and Saracina is John's second act, this time tapping the talents of winemaker Alex MacGregor and consultant David Ramey. Formerly the Sundial ranch, Saracina ranch comprises 300 acres of vineyards divided into more than 20 blocks. It's a visual treat to drive up to the stylish tasting room, taking in the old cork trees and Italian red willows. Saracina also has the only wine cave in Mendocino, and it's worth a tour. Atrea The Choir, a white

Rhône blend, and Atrea Old Soul Red, a Zinfandel-based mix, are among the strengths. —M.W.

TOULOUSE VINEYARDS

8001 Highway 128, Philo **Telephone** (707) 895-2828 **Website** www.toulousevineyards.com **Open** Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Cost** Tastings \$5

Look for the geese signs along the road to point the way up the hill to Toulouse, which hosts one of the most popular tasting rooms in Anderson Valley. You're likely to meet the owners, Vern and Maxine Boltz, in the tasting room, pouring their wines for visitors and swapping stories. The furniture is made out of recycled wine barrels, and the atmosphere here is very informal. Views of the valley from the wood deck will entice you to stick around. Don't let the casual feeling fool you, however—the wines here are seriously good, particularly the Pinot Noirs. —M.W.



The wine cave at Saracina Vineyards in Hopland



Owners Maxine and Vern Boltz greet guests in the tasting room at Toulouse, in Philo.

Where to Eat

ALBION RIVER INN

3790 N. Highway 1, Albion **Telephone** (707) 937-1919; (800) 479-7944
Website www.albionriverinn.com/restaurant.php **Open** Dinner, daily
Cost Entrées \$18–\$39 **Corkage** \$15 **Credit cards** All major

Restaurants with a view often fail to deliver an equally good food-and-wine experience, but Albion River Inn is up to the task. With its exposed wood ceiling and brick fireplace, the 80-seat space offers impressive vistas of rocky Pacific coastline. The menu offers variety but



Ledford House features Mediterranean dishes and a Pacific view.



Café Beaujolais is known for luxurious preparations of comfort foods.

is strong on local seafood: salmon, Dungeness crab, etc. While the kitchen doesn't always live up to its aspirations, it seldom disappoints. The wine list is among the largest and best on the coast, with 350 selections and moderate prices, ranging from Husch Sauvignon Blanc Mendocino 2011 for \$25 to Peter Michael Les Pavots 2004 for \$225. —T.F.

CAFÉ BEAUJOLAIS

961 Ukiah St., Mendocino **Telephone** (707) 937-5614 **Website** www.cafebeaujolais.com **Open** Lunch, Wednesday to Sunday; dinner, daily **Cost** Entrées \$23–\$35 **Corkage** \$20 **Credit cards** All major

Award of Excellence

This Mendocino institution first gained national attention with chef Margaret Fox, and although there are new owners today, Café Beaujolais continues its commitment to quality. Local producers and organic ingredients are featured prominently on the menu, which blends luxury into rustic comforts such as Dungeness crab cakes, pan-roasted sturgeon and lamb shanks. The wine list has about 300 selections, and European and other imports are liberally interspersed among the California bottlings. Pricing is moderate, with Navarro Dry Muscat Blanc Anderson Valley 2011 selling for \$36 and the impressive Château Valandraud St.-Emilion 1998 at \$500. Located inside an 1893 Victorian farmhouse, the restaurant decor displays crisp, country elegance, with wood floors and warm colors. —T.F.

LEDFORD HOUSE

3000 N. Highway 1, Albion **Telephone** (707) 937-0282 **Website** www.ledfordhouse.com **Open** Dinner, Wednesday to Sunday **Cost** Entrées \$14–\$30 **Corkage** \$18 **Credit cards** MasterCard, Visa

A French country bistro perched on a bluff overlooking the Pacific, Ledford House is a place of many charms. The menu offers those familiar Mediterranean dishes that so many of us crave—fisherman's stew, cassoulet, duck pâté, gnocchi, braised rabbit—and the kitchen delivers with aplomb. The wine list is a modest collection of about 60 wines exclusively from Mendocino, and the prices are a bargain, with Baxter Pinot Noir Oppenlander Vineyard 2007 going for \$70 and Monte Volpe Pinot Grigio 2011 at \$24. The dining room is casually stylish and has a wall of windows that makes it ideal for sunset dinners. —T.F.

MACCALLUM HOUSE RESTAURANT

45020 Albion St., Mendocino **Telephone** (707) 937-0289; (800) 609-0492
Website www.maccallumhouse.com **Open** Dinner, daily **Cost** Entrées \$26–42 **Corkage** \$20 **Credit cards** All major

This 1882 gingerbread Victorian offers romance to spare with a dining room rich with old-growth redwood trim and wainscoting, and on cool Mendocino evenings you can warm yourself by the river stone fireplaces. The food-and-wine program is equally comforting. Unlike many inn restaurants, MacCallum wisely focuses on only a handful of dishes, and the results are notable, if occasionally uneven. The menu offers Pacific oysters and mussels, fish fresh from the local market and, often, rich duck and beef dishes to round things out. About 150 selections compose the wine list, which is almost exclusively Californian. Pricing is moderate and ranges from Handley Chardonnay Anderson Valley 2010 for \$37 to Dominus 2004 for \$290. —T.F.

PATRONA

130 W. Standley St., Ukiah **Telephone** (707) 462-9181 **Website** www.patronarestaurant.com **Open** Lunch and dinner, daily **Cost** Entrées \$13–\$32 **Corkage** \$12 **Credit cards** All major

Patrona is an epicurean gem in the inland town of Ukiah, and one of

Mendocino's MacCallum House, built in the late 19th century, is both inn and restaurant, offering romantic accommodations and a focused menu and wine list.





Chef-owner John Schmitt (right) and chef Brennon Moore of Table 128



Patrona owners Bridget Harrington and Craig Strattman

the best and most wine-friendly restaurants in the area. Exposed brick and relaxed lighting set the mood, but it's the aromas from the kitchen that grab the most attention. Husband-and-wife team Craig Strattman and Bridget Harrington were both winery chefs before opening Patrona in 2003—he for Chalk Hill winery, she for Fetzer Vineyards. The focus here is on fresh, local ingredients. Seared rainbow trout pairs beautifully with a glass of Roederer Estate Brut (\$11) or a bottle of Bonterra Pinot Noir (\$30). The wine list has about 100 offerings, many of them local, with most priced in the \$30 to \$40 range. —M.W.

PIAZZA DE CAMPOVIDA

13441 S. Highway 101, Hopland Telephone (707) 744-1977 Website www.piazzadecampovida.com Open Lunch and dinner, Wednesday to Monday Cost Entrées \$9–\$16 Corkage \$10; free for Mendocino wines

This pizzeria-taverna located in the heart of the county is a fine choice for lunch or a casual dinner, and there's a good chance a winemaker or grapegrower will be sitting at the table next to yours. The menu features starters such as marinated Italian olives and butter-braised Brussels sprouts with pancetta. The wood-fired brick oven produces tasty thin-crust pizzas with toppings such as pesto with burrata, and an intriguing pie with treviso, pancetta, fontina and egg. There's a token wine list, but Campovida has its own beers, specially produced, ranging from the Pilsner-like Hopland Gold to Pump House Porter. —T.F.

TABLE 128

Boonville Hotel, 14050 Highway 128, Boonville Telephone (707) 895-2210 Website www.boonvillehotel.com/eat.php Open Dinner, Thursday to Monday Cost Prix-fixe \$50 Corkage \$20

This is the sort of restaurant every good country inn deserves. Chef-owner John Schmitt grew up cooking in his family's restaurant, the earlier iteration of The French Laundry, before Thomas Keller, and his food is hearty yet artful. The menu is a four-course meal that changes daily, served family-style. One night the entrée might be pan-seared swordfish, the next a leg of lamb. There are only a few dozen seats spread through the restaurant's four rooms, which are brightly colored spaces accented with modern art. The wine list has only about 50 bottles, but it's a sharp collection of intriguing wines. The prices are generally a steal, with wines like Joel Gott Sauvignon Blanc 2010 selling for \$30, but there are some pricier gems as well, such as Roederer Estate L'Ermitage Rosé 2003 for \$100. —T.F.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Apple Farm – A working orchard and cooking school with guest cottages. 18501 Greenwood Road, Philo; (707) 895-2333

GoodLife Café & Bakery – A funky little spot that fans claim is the best coffee shop on the Mendocino coast. 10483 Lansing St., Mendocino; (707) 937-0836

Libby's Restaurant – Carnitas are the star at this homey Mexican restaurant, which winemakers frequent. 8651 Highway 128, Philo; (707) 895-2646

Paysanne – A charming French-style ice cream shop with homemade cookies, ice pops and drinks. 14111 Highway 128, Boonville; (707) 937-1831

Pennyroyal Farm – Artisanal goat and sheep cheeses produced on site. Sales and tours by appointment. 14930 Highway 128, Boonville; (707) 895-2410

Where to Stay

ALBION RIVER INN

3790 N. Highway 1, Albion Telephone (707) 937-1919 Website www.albionriverinn.com Rooms 16 Suites 6 Rates \$137-\$325

The breathtaking views of the waves crashing along the coastline say it all at this charming cliffside inn. Nestled on a small bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and conveniently located midway between the



Private decks encourage relaxation at Albion River Inn.



Boonville Hotel is a place to get away from it all.

wineries of Anderson Valley and Mendocino village, Albion River Inn evokes the elegance of a New England lodging yet with a decidedly casual vibe. Guest rooms are grouped in 12 cottages lining the property, all with sweeping views of Albion Cove. Contemporary in style, the rooms are comfortable and understated, with private entrances and fireplaces, and most have private decks where guests can relax in Adirondack chairs, taking in the sights while enjoying a glass of wine. The suites are spacious and set a romantic mood with two-person spa tubs that look out over the ocean.

—Augustus Weed

BOONVILLE HOTEL

14050 Highway 128, Boonville Telephone (707) 895-2210 Website www.boonvillehotel.com Rooms 13 Suites 2 Rates \$125-\$325

This is where you go when you want to escape. Located in the quaint village of Boonville, it's just a short drive to many Anderson Valley wineries. There are a variety of rooms in the main building, while other rooms are more remote and located around the beautiful grounds, including a secluded bungalow with a private sunroom. Simplicity and relaxation are the key words here—there are only the most basic of amenities—but rooms are comfortable and uncluttered. There aren't any televisions or alarm clocks—instead, it is quiet and low-key, with gardens to explore, a fire pit, large bathrooms with oversize tubs, and everything decorated with a rustic simplicity and just a touch of wine country chic. A complimentary breakfast includes homemade granola and freshly baked scones.

—M.W.

LITTLE RIVER INN

7901 N. Highway 1, Little River Telephone (707) 937-5942 Website www.littleriverinn.com Rooms 32 Suites 24 Cottages 5 Rates \$149-\$369

This elegant seaside inn combines warm and friendly service with the amenities and comforts of a small resort. Just a short drive from downtown Mendocino, the 225-acre grounds include a nine-hole golf course, tennis courts and even a full-service spa. Built by Silas Coombs in the late 1800s, the original Victorian house was converted to an inn in 1939 and is now operated by the fifth generation of the family. Guests can select from a wide variety of lodgings, from cozy upstairs rooms in the main house to spacious suites and several cottages scattered around the property. Most of the accommodations offer magnificent views of the ocean and feature fireplaces and decks or balconies. For the ultimate romantic getaway, opt for a room in the recently redesigned Electra house. After a day of touring wineries, guests can dine at the restaurant or enjoy a drink at the bar.

—A.W.

MACCALLUM HOUSE

45020 Albion St., Mendocino Telephone (707) 937-0289 Website www.maccallumhouse.com Rooms 22 Suites 9 Rates \$125-\$399

This historic and stately bed-and-breakfast is located in the heart of Mendocino, easy walking distance from the village's shops and restaurants. Built in 1882 as a private residence, the inn retains much of its 19th-century charm while tastefully integrating modern amenities. Accommodations vary in size and style and suit a variety of tastes and budgets. Rooms in the inn's main Victorian house stay true to the time period with claw-foot bathtubs and antique furniture, and several cottages provide rustic elegance. The most luxurious rooms are in the barn, and feature stone fireplaces and decks with ocean views or private hot tubs. The inn's suites are located a short drive away in a separate mansion overlooking the town and offer some of the most spacious and modern accommodations in Mendocino.

—A.W. □