

Chapter 1

Introducing California Wines

In This Chapter

- ▶ The gamut of California's wine production
- ▶ California wine's international status
- ▶ Why the region is ideal for producing wines
- ▶ California's colorful wine history

All 50 U.S. states make wine — mainly from grapes but in some cases from berries, pineapple, or other fruits. Equality and democracy end there. California stands apart from the whole rest of the pack for the quantity of wine it produces, the international reputation of those wines, and the degree to which wine has permeated the local culture. To say that in the U.S., wine *is* California wine is not a huge exaggeration.

If you want to begin finding out about wine, the wines of California are a good place to start. If you're already a wine lover, chances are that California's wines still hold a few surprises worth discovering. To get you started, we paint the big picture of California wine in this chapter.

Covering All the Bases in Wine Production

Wine, of course, is not just wine. The shades of quality, price, color, sweetness, dryness, and flavor among wines are so many that you can consider *wine* a whole world of beverages rather than a single product. Can a single U.S. state possibly embody this whole world of wine? California can and does.

Whatever your notion of wine is — even if that changes with the seasons, the foods you're preparing, or how much you like the people you'll be dining with — California has that base covered. We would be the last people to suggest that you forever-after

drink the wines of only one state or wine region, because we believe in constant experimentation; however, if that curse were to befall you, you could rest assured that within the boundaries of California, you could find just about any type of wine you might desire.

The color and type spectrums

California makes a huge amount of white wine and red wine — the split is about even these days — and yet one of California's best-selling types of wines is actually pink, or *rosé*. (That would be the wine called White Zinfandel, and yes, that name is illogical.) California also produces plenty of *rosé* wines besides White Zinfandel.

Sparkling wine — wine with bubbles in it — and really sweet like-dessert-in-a-glass wines are two classic types of wine beyond regular *still* (nonsparkling), *dry* (not sweet) wines. California's sparkling wines range in price from super-affordable to elite, and in quality, they range from decent to world-class. They also encompass a range of styles, from sweet and easy-to-enjoy to classically dry and complex. Sweet dessert wines are one of California's smallest wine categories, but nevertheless, you can score. Your options range from delicious red Port-style wines (*fortified* wines, made by adding extra alcohol) to rich, seductive golden-colored wines made from grapes that shriveled into an extra sweet state.

Have we missed anything? We hope not, because California doesn't! We cover white and red wines in Chapters 5 through 10, and we cover *rosé*, sparkling, and dessert wines in Chapter 11.

The wallet spectrum

For some wine drinkers, love of wine is color blind as long as the price is right — and the wine producers of California are completely obliging. At their most affordable, California's wines cost as little as \$2 for the equivalent of a standard bottle. (The volume of a standard wine bottle is 750 milliliters, which is a little more than 25 ounces.) And a few elite wines boast prices of up to \$750 a bottle. Yes, that's \$1 per milliliter, or \$30 an ounce.

In terms of the dollar value of sales, the booming segment of the market is in the \$15-and-up wines. But a greater quantity of wine sells in the under-\$8 price tier. Bottom line: plenty of wine at whatever price you choose.



Defining wine

If you're new to the whole wine experience, we proudly recommend that you take a look at our book, *Wine For Dummies*, 4th Edition (Wiley), because it provides a wealth of information about wine in general that can help you appreciate our favorite beverage. But the last thing we want to do is halt your momentum in discovering California's wines, so for now, here's a quick summary of what wine is and how a wine gets to be the way it is.

Wine is grape juice that underwent fermentation, a biological process in which microscopic fungi called yeasts transform the sugar in the juice into alcohol and carbon dioxide (which usually dissipates). A *dry* wine is a wine whose grape sugar converted totally or almost totally into alcohol so that little or no sugar remains in the wine. Wines that retain some natural grape sugar are categorized as off-dry, medium-dry, medium-sweet, or sweet, depending on how much sugar they contain.

A dry wine is mainly water, with about 12 to 16 percent alcohol (ethanol), 0.5 to 1 percent glycerol (a sweet alcohol), 0.5 to 0.7 percent tartaric acid (from the grapes), and hundreds of minor components. These minor components include other acids, *tannin* (a natural substance in the grape skins and seeds), the grapes' coloring matter, unfermented grape sugar (called *residual* sugar), minerals, aromatic compounds that create the wine's aromas and flavors, and so forth.

Most of the components of wine come from the grapes. Others come from the fermentation process, the materials that the wine or juice comes in contact with (such as oak barrels), and the wine's aging process before and/or after the wine is bottled and sold. The winemaker also often adds certain substances, such as sulfur dioxide (which helps prevent the wine from turning to vinegar) or extra acid, in tiny amounts.

Even though wine is mainly water, it's an amazingly complex liquid. Different wines can be similar in taste, but no two wines are exactly the same. The taste of any one wine is a function of

- ✔ The grapes
- ✔ The winemaking technique, such as the temperature or duration of fermentation and the type of container used for fermentation or aging
- ✔ How young or old the wine is when you drink it
- ✔ How you store it and how it was stored before you bought it (heat can age a wine prematurely, for example, or ruin it)

Even the type of closure on the bottle — natural cork, plastic "cork," composite cork, or a screw-off cap — can affect the wine's taste. Even the type of glass that you drink it from can affect its taste!

What's a quality wine, anyway?

You can't read this book — or any other book on wine, for that matter — without stumbling across frequent references to wine quality. If you conclude that some wines are higher in quality than others, you're right. But how much should quality matter to you in choosing your wine?

First of all, you can take comfort in knowing that very few poor-quality wines exist today. The quality scale of California's wines, for example, runs from acceptable to superb, and most wines fall into the *good* range. Secondly, you should remember that the quality of a wine is ultimately less important than the enjoyment the wine brings you. When a wine is satisfying, what more can you ask of it?

Wine experts assess the quality of a wine by evaluating all its characteristics, deciding how well the various aspects of the wine work together, and measuring all this against their mental yardsticks of what they consider to be wine perfection. Some of the issues might not be important to you. For example, a wine that seems to be capable of developing great complexity of flavor as it ages can earn bonus points from an expert, but you might plan to drink the wine in the next 24 hours. Or a wine can lose points because its taste doesn't follow through to the rear of your mouth (it doesn't have *length*); but if you tend to simply drink a wine rather than analyze it as it flows across your tongue, the initial impression of flavor is more important to you.

Many of the wines that experts consider to be lower down the quality scale are wines that are made purposely to appeal to certain groups of wine drinkers. They have characteristics such as intense flavor that hits you immediately, soft *texture* (the tactile feeling of the wine against your tongue and gums), and a slight note of sweetness — all of which make the wine taste delicious — but they lack the nuances of flavor or texture that a finer wine would have.

The packaging spectrum

For several generations, until the mid-1970s, California specialized in making red, white, and pink wines that sold in large jug-like bottles at very affordable prices. These were easy wines for everyday life, with screw-off caps so that you could pour two glasses and then close up the bottle for the next day. You can still find these California *jug wines* in most places where wine is sold, although their sales have declined.

Today's large-volume, easy-open option is the 3-liter box with a collapsible bag of wine inside and a spigot attached to the bag for easy serving. Some California wines even come in *Tetra-Brik* packages, which are compact, plasticized paper containers like you see for cooked tomatoes, generally about 1 liter in size — 33 percent bigger than a standard wine bottle. They don't require a plastic

bag inside them to hold the wine, and they're super portable, not to mention eco-friendly and a great value. California is certainly not the only place that's packaging wine in innovative ways like this, but California's wine repertoire definitely includes plenty of wines in this category.



User-friendly wine options from California now also include premium wines — the good stuff — in regular-size wine bottles that are sealed with screw-off caps. Some winemakers, concerned that the screwcaps might confuse wine drinkers because of California's long tradition of making inexpensive jug wines with that type of closure, aren't embracing screwcaps for fine wine the way that Australian and New Zealand winemakers are. But some are, so California has that, too.

Leading the Market in Popularity

The Golden State makes more wine than all other U.S. states combined. Not only that: Its wine production is huge even on a world scale. The U.S. as a whole ranks fourth for the quantity of wine it produces. But California owns that number-four spot even all by itself, producing 7 percent of the world's wine — more than Argentina, Chile, Australia, Germany, and every other country except for Italy, France, and Spain.



In 2007, California made almost 566 million gallons of wine. That's equivalent to more than 2.8 billion standard-size bottles.

All that production reflects a big demand for California wine. Two out of every three times that someone in the U.S. grabs a bottle of wine to take home, points to a wine name on a restaurant wine list, or clicks on the computer screen to buy wine, that wine comes from California.

A driving force behind the popularity of California wine is the way the wines taste. We're about to make a generalization here, but we feel that it's a safe one: California wines are very fruity (that is, they have aromas and flavors that suggest fruits) and very flavorful (those fruity flavors are intense and easy to notice when you taste the wine), and these characteristics appeal to the typical American palate. When Americans taste California wines, they like them, and they come back to them again and again. Well, two out of three times, anyway.

Another factor feeding the popularity of California wines is the smart marketing that the wineries practice. Winemakers in California understand what people want and make wines that fill those needs. That's why California wines run the whole gamut of

styles and types: Wine drinkers themselves run the whole gamut in taste and price preferences. Whether you're a glass-of-Chardonnay-at-the-bar drinker, a fine wine collector, or a passionate Pinot Noir hobbyist, California makes wines that can appeal to you.

Of course, quality plays a role also. Starting in the 1970s, California pioneered many winemaking innovations that improved wine quality. Flaws that used to exist in wines all over the world are now rare because the highly trained winemakers of California discovered how to prevent them, and other winemakers followed suit. In terms of fundamental quality, California wines are among the most reliable in the world.

Golden Resources in the Golden State

Could the success story of California wines have happened just anywhere, or is there something about California itself that's an integral part of the picture?

Actually, the place itself is always part of the picture when you talk about wine. Wine is an agricultural product: The grapes that are the raw material for wine come from vineyards that have certain growing conditions — certain soil fertility, certain moisture, certain sunshine and heat, and so forth. These growing conditions affect the quality and, to some extent, the style of the final wine. If California makes quality, flavorful wines, that's due in no small part to the place called California. We discuss the various regions of California in Chapter 4, but for now, read on to find out what makes the state as a whole so ideal for producing wine.

California climate

Of the various factors that influence vineyard regions and determine their suitability for growing wine grapes, one of the most important is climate. *Climate* is the general meteorological pattern of a large area. *Microclimate*, a term you hear frequently in wine circles, is the particular meteorological pattern of a smaller area, such as a certain hillside.

In wine terms, what matters is having a good, long stretch of months with temperatures above 50°F, not-excessive amounts of rain, and few, if any, frosts or hailstorms. Beyond those basic requirements, winemakers look for special characteristics, such as fog or winds that moderate high temperatures, long sunshine

hours, or abundant winter rains that supply groundwater. Every nuance in a microclimate affects the grapes that grow there. Even if California wines are generally very fruity and flavorful, nuances of taste occur as the result of differences in climate — and these differences are part of the reason California makes wines in every conceivable style.



The French use the word *terroir* to describe the combination of climate and soil factors that affect the grapes and thereby influence the style of an area's wines. California's winemakers sometimes use this term themselves.

Rainfall and the need for irrigation

California has a Mediterranean-type climate, which means that rains fall in the winter but not during the summer growing season. We can still remember our disappointment the first time we went to Northern California during the summer, expecting to see green landscapes and finding brown grass and parched fields instead. (At least the vines themselves were green and gorgeous.)

To supply the water grapevines need, most wineries in California rely on irrigation. Generally they use *drip irrigation*, a system that feeds drops of water to each vine through a small hose that stretches along the base of the vines. These days, irrigating the vines is a complex balancing act between conserving water and giving the vines enough.



Some vineyards, particularly those on steep slopes where irrigation installations are difficult, survive on only the water that the ground holds. California has these *dry-farmed* vineyards, but they're the exception rather than the rule.

Hot but cool, cool but hot

Apart from their common lack of growing-season rain, California's winemakers face many differences in weather patterns, depending on where in the state their vineyards are situated. For example, in the huge Central Valley, which lies mainly south of the state capital of Sacramento, the temperatures can be very high all summer. In contrast, the vineyards in Napa and Sonoma Counties that lie across the San Pablo Bay north of San Francisco experience many mornings that are so cool and foggy you might forget that it's summer.



More than 60 years ago, two eminent scientists in California devised a method for categorizing the climate of various wine regions according to the average monthly temperatures from April through October. They defined five temperature bands, calling the coolest one Region I and the warmest, Region V. Different *heat*

summation regions, as they're called, are appropriate for growing grapes to make different types of wines. California's finest wines come from the cooler regions, Regions I and II.

Ocean breezes, elevation, and other influences on climate

Picture what California looks like on a map. (If you're having trouble, turn to Chapter 4 for a map of California's wine regions.) With its long coastline, mountains, and deserts, the state has an amazing range of altitudes and other features that influence temperature, humidity, and rainfall patterns. The Pacific Ocean to the west represents a moist, cooling influence, whereas the deserts that occupy the state's eastern border, adjacent to Nevada and Arizona, represent a hot, dry weather influence.



In California, one of the key determinants of local climate is not how northerly or southerly a vineyard is but how close it is to the Pacific Ocean. Ocean breezes and fog moderate the temperature downward. Interior vineyard areas experience no moderating influence from the ocean, except in special cases when a mountain range funnels ocean air far inward or through some such anomaly.

California also boasts a wide range of altitudes, from Death Valley, which lies at 282 feet below sea level, to Mount Whitney, which rises 14,505 feet above sea level. You won't find any wineries or vineyards at either extreme, of course, but the state's diversity of altitudes has an impact on its wines nonetheless.

Altitudes vary even within a single wine region of California. Napa Valley, for example — California's most famous wine region — has vineyards on flat, low-lying land close to the Napa River; on hillsides that rise gently to the west and east of the river; and on mountains that rise above the hills. And that's just one of California's wine regions, of which there are dozens.

Soil matters

In grape-growing circles, not all dirt is equal. The particular soil that a vineyard has is an important element in the overall ecosystem of that vineyard, affecting the availability of water and nutrients to the vines, the depth to which the roots grow, the rate of vine growth, and so forth.

Different soils can require different irrigation treatments, different pruning techniques, or different *rootstocks* (the rooting part of the vine, which, through grafting, is usually a different species from the part of the vine that produces the fruit). Subtly or not-so-subtly, the soil affects the way the grapes grow and therefore the wine that the grapes make.

The vineyard temperature dynamic

How much can vineyard temperature affect the taste of the final wine? Actually, quite a lot. Generally speaking, the warmer the temperature of the vineyard, the riper the grapes get. The riper the grapes get, the more sugar and the less acidity they have; they taste sweeter and less tart, just as for any other fruit.

In the winemaking process, the sugar that accumulates in the grapes changes into alcohol — therefore, the riper the grapes, the higher the alcohol content of the wine. Besides being high in alcohol, wines from very ripe grapes have flavors of very ripe fruit or sometimes even baked fruit. And because the acidity of the grapes is lower, the acidity of the wine is lower (unless the winemaker adds acid to the juice); the lower acidity makes for a softer texture in the wine.

Grapes that are somewhat less ripe, as they can be in cooler vineyards, tend to make wines with medium alcohol levels, fresh fruity flavors, and enough acidity to bring vibrancy to the wine. Either style of wine can be delicious, but each is distinct from the other because of the vineyard temperature.

In California, many of the least expensive wines come from grapes grown in fertile soils, and plenty of the fine wines come from grapes grown in soils of medium or poor fertility. Mountain vineyards in particular tend to have poor soils, resulting in grapes that are concentrated in color and flavor.

California's winemakers tend to place less emphasis on soil than many European winemakers do, but that doesn't mean that soil variations don't exist throughout the state. In Napa Valley alone, scientists have documented more than 30 different types of soil.

The human factor

Another element in California's unique combination of wine resources is its people. Even if Californians joke that very few of them were born actually in California, the fact is that California's climate and lifestyle have attracted an impressive pool of winemaking talent. Or to be perfectly correct, California has attracted the people, and its universities have nurtured the winemaking talent.

California boasts two major universities that specialize in teaching winemaking and *viticulture* (that's *grape growing* to the rest of us). The two schools are the California State University at Fresno (www.csufresno.edu) and the University of California at Davis (www.ucdavis.edu), each known in wine circles by just its location name. A high percentage of California's own winemakers have launched their careers by studying at these universities.

Davis, in particular, is world famous. Seldom do we visit wine regions in Europe — even the most established, elite winemaking regions — without meeting a winemaker who studied at Davis. The stellar reputation of the university's technical wine programs has made Davis a destination of choice for those who could go anywhere in the world.

Besides studying in California, winemakers from abroad often spend time working in California's wineries, particularly when they're young and just getting started in their families' wine businesses. This is a boon for everyone involved, because the sharing of traditions and winemaking philosophy that results enriches the experience of California's winemakers as much as it does the visitors'.

California's Wine Timeline

We've visited the vineyards of Greece and Israel, which both have histories of grape growing and wine production that date back 4,000 to 5,000 years. By those standards, California is a baby. Wine grapes have grown in California for no more than 250 years. (That's one reason you might hear California referred to as a *New World* wine region, as opposed to Europe's vineyards, which are part of the *Old World* of wine.)

California's youth doesn't imply a lack of history, however. Those 250 years have seen several distinct phases of wine production and an impressive growth trend.

Planting the seeds in the 18th century

Wine grapes first came to California via Mexico. After Mexico became part of the Spanish Empire in the early 1500s, Spanish missionaries, both Jesuits and Franciscans, planted vineyards in Mexico. Gradually, as Spain expanded its reach, the missionaries moved up to "New Mexico," an area that spread from what's now Texas to California.

Franciscan Father Junípero Serra, the greatest Spanish wine missionary of all, planted the first California vineyard at Mission San Diego in 1769. Father Serra established eight more missions and vineyard sites as he traveled north in California. He died in 1784 and is justifiably known as the Father of California Wine.

The variety Father Serra planted, descended from Spanish vines growing in Mexico, became known as the Mission grape, and it dominated California wine production until about 1880, when the grape variety called Zinfandel became established (refer to Chapter 8 for more on Zinfandel's heritage).

The founder and other pioneers

In 1833, a Frenchman named Jean-Louis Vignes planted other European vines in Los Angeles. But the person who did the most to establish California wine — the founder of the California wine industry — was a Hungarian immigrant named Agoston Haraszthy.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Haraszthy, a merchant and ultimately a promoter of California wine, made several trips to Europe, returning with vine cuttings from 165 of Europe's best vineyards. Although he did obtain grants from California to cover some of the expenses, he covered much of the cost personally. Haraszthy introduced about 300 grape varieties to California, an amazing feat.

Haraszthy also fostered vine planting all over Northern California, promoted hillside planting, dug caves for cellaring wine, and championed dry-farmed (nonirrigated) vineyards. And he founded Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma's Carneros region in 1857. Buena Vista is the oldest continually operating winery in California.

Other early wineries include the following:

- ✔ **Charles Krug:** Napa Valley's first commercial winery, Charles Krug, opened in 1861. Robert Mondavi's parents later acquired it (see the upcoming section "Reinventing itself in the 1960s"). Today, the Peter Mondavi family owns and operates the winery.
- ✔ **Schramsberg:** In 1862, Jacob Schram, a German immigrant, founded the Schramsberg winery on Napa Valley's Diamond Mountain. About a century later, the late Jack and Jamie Davies stumbled upon the long-abandoned winery and began California's first modern sparkling wine business at Schramsberg — today better than ever under the tutelage of the Davies' son, Hugh. (**Note:** In the 1890s, French immigrant Paul Masson probably pioneered California sparkling wine in the Santa Cruz Mountains.)
- ✔ **Simi:** In 1876, two Tuscan immigrant brothers, Giuseppe and Pietro Simi, began making wine in San Francisco from Sonoma County grapes. In 1881, the Simi brothers planted vineyards in Sonoma's Alexander Valley and founded the historic Simi Winery.

✓ **Wente:** In 1883, Wente Vineyards opened in Livermore Valley, east of San Francisco. It's the oldest continuously operating family-owned winery in California.

By 1889, more than 140 wineries existed in California, including Beringer (1876) and Inglenook (1879). By the 1900s, nearly 800 wineries existed in the United States; a good number of these wineries were in California, but they were also in New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and Missouri. California wines found export markets as far away as Australia.

Surviving Prohibition

California winemaking was forced to take a big time-out on January 16, 1920, when the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — the Prohibition amendment — went into effect. Through a technicality, home wine production of up to 200 gallons a year remained legal. Although many growers of wine grapes in California went out of business, others were able to survive by making grape juice or by growing grapes for this new home winemaking market. Trainloads of wine grapes went outward from California to major Midwest and Eastern cities, where private citizens, many of them immigrants from countries that had strong wine cultures (such as Italy), bought the grapes for wines they produced in their basements.

When the 21st Amendment repealed the 18th Amendment effective December 5, 1933, and alcohol production again became legal, the California families who managed to keep their vineyards going were poised to produce wine for the thirsty nation. The number of wineries had dwindled to only 140, however.

Inexpensive *generic* wines — wines named for wines from other countries — became big business in the post-Prohibition era through the 1950s. Dessert wines (sweet wines) and fortified wines (wines strengthened with extra alcohol) became the dominant style from California. Not until 1963 did U.S. consumption of dry table wines (from California and elsewhere, including Europe) exceed consumption of rich, sweet wines. But then things began to change.

Reinventing itself in the 1960s

What happened to the California wine industry and the image of California wines starting in the 1960s was nothing short of revolutionary. It didn't begin suddenly — a few wineries in Napa Valley,

Sonoma County, and surrounding areas had already made inroads in a new direction as early as the 1930s. But by the 1960s, the movement had achieved critical mass.

What exactly was this movement? It was a focus on quality and on varietal wines. A *varietal* wine is a wine named for the single or dominant grape variety that makes the wine. By naming wines *Chardonnay* or *Cabernet Sauvignon* instead of using meaningless generic names borrowed from famous wine regions outside the U.S., California's wine producers suddenly brought new legitimacy to their wines. Varietal naming was not the norm then — the majority of European wines were, and still are, named for the place where the grapes grew rather than the grape variety — and California caught the world's eye in adopting this practice.

A pivotal moment in California's wine revolution was the decision of the late Robert Mondavi to leave his family's winery, Charles Krug, and start his own winery. Robert Mondavi Winery opened in 1966, and from day one, its focus was on quality. Mondavi himself became an unofficial ambassador for California wines, particularly those of Napa Valley, and he convinced elite wine producers from all over the world that California was indeed one of the world's finest wine regions. The reputation of Napa Valley and the appeal of the wine business became such that a winery boom occurred in California, and it continues to this day. In 1960, California had 256 wineries, and by 1980, it had almost double that number, 508. Today, California boasts more than 2,600 wineries — and most likely twice as many brands of wine.

Another pivotal moment came in 1976 at a Parisian blind wine-tasting. At what came to be known as the *Judgment of Paris*, a group of expert French wine tasters ranked a Napa Valley Chardonnay higher than the prestigious French white wines featured in the event, and they ranked a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon higher than the elite French red wines they tasted. The wine world was shocked by the success of upstart California. A whole new era began for California wine.

Expanding in the late 20th and early 21st centuries



The growth of California wine from the 1980s to the present has occurred on two fronts: qualitative and quantitative. Statistics testify to the growth in numbers:

- ✓ By the end of 2007, California wineries numbered 2,687.
- ✓ Vineyard land in California covered more than 475,000 acres in 2007, a growth of 43 percent since the late 1980s.
- ✓ California wineries shipped more than 541 million gallons of wine in 2007.

Part of the backstory behind these numbers is the fact that since the 1980s, owning a winery in California has become an aspiration of successful individuals from other walks of life. Doctors, airline pilots, film magnates, corporate executives, and technology millionaires have all poured their fortunes and their hearts into California wine country.

As for quality, much of California's growth in recent years has been an increased awareness of the importance of vineyard sites and a better understanding of how to maximize the potential of specific plots of land.

It was a crisis that instigated this growth in knowledge. In the 1980s, many vines in California began to die because of a tiny louse called *phylloxera* that was gradually destroying the vines' roots. Phylloxera had visited California before, in the late 19th century. The solution then was to graft the *Vitis vinifera* vines — the dominant wine grape species — onto rootstocks of other vine species that were phylloxera-resistant. In the 1980s, California's most prevalent rootstock unexpectedly fell victim to the bug. Except for a lucky few, vineyard and winery owners were forced to make the difficult decision to uproot their vines and replant their land.

In hindsight, this crisis was a great opportunity. It enabled vineyard owners to undo any mistakes of the past and to take advantage of all the knowledge about grape growing that had developed in the years since they had first planted their fields. Awareness of the vineyard's role in producing fine wine increased among winemakers. Today, when winemakers discuss their wines, they're likely to spend as much time talking about the vineyard as about how they make their wine.



Today, California wine country and California wines are so famous and so popular that 14.5 million tourists visit California wine country each year. To put that in perspective, that's fewer tourists than Disneyland gets but more than Hollywood does.