



Will Travel For Food California Calling

Sip Your Way through Santa Ynez Valley.

By *Cara Rank*

Photos by *Allison Arthur*

E TASTED CHARDONNAY IN Napa Valley and sipped on Sonoma's best pinots. So, if you're looking for your next wine-tasting vacation, perhaps one that's a little more mellow with fewer crowds, head south to the Santa Ynez Valley. The six small towns that make up this region offer some of the most diverse wines in California.

The weather will transport you to southern France, and the vineyards and wineries are nothing short of Instagram-worthy. Located in northern Santa Barbara County, the area is just 35 miles from the beaches and a two-hour drive from Los Angeles. From the Scandinavian village of Solvang to the old western town of Los Alamos, it's got to-die-for restaurants and sweeping views. An added bonus? The area is still small and emerging enough that wherever you go you will probably

meet the maker of the wine you are tasting and the chefs who've prepared your food. Welcome to the Napa of many years ago.

LOS ALAMOS

Stay

SKYVIEW LOS ALAMOS

Formerly a midcentury roadside motel, one of the Santa Ynez Valley's newest lodging options was transformed into a hip, boutique property, perched high on a hillside overlooking wine country. While the current owners kept some of the motel's original elements — like its yellow-and-black neon “Motel” sign — the update gave the 33 guest rooms a rustic, desert, bespoke vibe. Think cowhide rugs, white shiplap and Pendleton blankets. Bring a bottle back for sipping around the outdoor firepits, or take a dip in the retro-style heated pool. A vegetable garden stocks the on-property restaurant, Norman, named after Norman Bates from “Psycho.” Soon, you'll be able to sip pinot and chardonnay produced from the hotel's working vineyard, too.

Eat

BOB'S WELL BREAD BAKERY

Founded in 2014 by Bob Oswaks — the former president of worldwide marketing for Sony Pictures — Bob's Well Bread is a local landmark that was founded in, you guessed it, a renovated gas station. Meticulous about everything he creates, Oswaks crafts all the bread and pastries from the finest ingredients and natural starters. Baked in a stone-deck oven, his artisan breads are a labor of love, but he may be best known for his canelés, available only on weekends and often selling out quickly. Oswaks' inventive breakfast includes Beans on Toast — house-made baked beans, fried farm egg, roasted tomatoes, Toulouse

sausage and toasted Pain de Mie. Return at lunch for the Line Cook's Paté — grilled Pain au Levain served with brandy-infused chicken liver pâté, onion-bacon marmalade and cornichons.

Taste

CASA DUMETZ WINES AND BABI'S BEER EMPORIUM

Before she was a winemaker, Sonja Magdevski studied political science and journalism, even earning a Fulbright in Macedonia. In 2004 she



launched her label, Casa Dumetz, to focus on Rhône varieties. These days, she produces a tiny amount of wine, which is primarily sold through her eclectic, bright tasting room. Sample her

SONJA'S SIPS:

One of the biggest advantages of a wine trip to Santa Ynez is that the vineyards and tasting rooms are smaller and you often get to interact with the winemakers and owners like Sonja Magdevski from Casa Dumetz.

WINE AND DINE:
The close-to-the-coast location allows restaurants access to seafood, and the vineyards in the area often offer spots for spending the day with a picnic and yard games.



Casa Dumetz grenache and her Clementine Carter mourvèdre cider, which she calls “love potion in a bottle.” It also happens to make a delicious sangria recipe. Her label Feminist Party is a blend of grenache, syrah, and mourvèdre. If your palate is a little shot from so much wine, head next door to Magdevski’s

other enterprise, Babi’s, which is all about craft beer and cider. Find six beers on tap and bottles of regional, national and international brews. There’s even a taco counter.

BALLARD

Stay

BALLARD INN

This cozy inn is tucked away behind a white picket fence, dripping with greenery and roses. Inside, antique furnishings give this place a bed-and-breakfast meets Restoration Hardware vibe. Think modern farmhouse. The inn is charming, comfortable and romantic, and perfectly located for exploring the tiny towns of Ballard and Los Olivos and nearby family-owned wineries on the property’s bikes. Make sure to return in the afternoon for the wine and cheese cocktail hour, and take your glass of local red wine outside to one of the wicker rocking chairs on the wraparound porch. Each of the inn’s rooms carry a different theme and décor, with names such as The Farmhouse, The Davy Brown and The Equestrian. Each room also has a wood-burning fireplace for those chilly wine country nights.

Eat

THE GATHERING TABLE

If you’re staying at the Ballard Inn, you don’t have to walk far for an exceptional meal. Downstairs you can find The Gathering Table, which melds Asian and French cuisine crafted from seasonal, locally sourced produce, seafood and meats. It’s easy to see why this area favorite was named after the long communal table in the middle of its dining room. Chances are you’ll be seated next to some locals who frequent the 12-table restaurant for owner and chef Budi Kazali’s award-winning cuisine. And they won’t hesitate to lean over and tell you all about their friend Budi and what you should order. It’s just that kind of place. While the menu changes seasonally, don’t miss the sesame Caesar salad.



LOS OLIVOS

Eat

THE BEAR AND STAR

One of the area’s newer and most anticipated restaurants, The Bear and Star serves up “refined ranch cuisine,” food that’s inspired by Texas with a distinctly Californian approach. The restaurant is part of the Fess Parker empire (Parker grew up in the Lone Star State and played Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone on TV before turning to winemaking). The late Parker’s 714-acre ranch is 7 miles away from the restaurant,

which means the Bear and Star is in a unique position of producing much of its own product. The ranch is home to a wagyu cattle herd raised and finished with the spent grains and pomace from the family brewery and winery. Also raised/grown on the ranch are chickens, quail, rabbits, pigs, bees and a number of heirloom fruits and organic vegetables. Chef and partner Jon Cox (also a Texas native) uses a custom reverse-flow Texas smoker housed on the property for slow smoking and barbecuing many of the dishes. Don’t miss the smoked meatloaf.

LOS OLIVOS

WINE MERCHANT CAFE

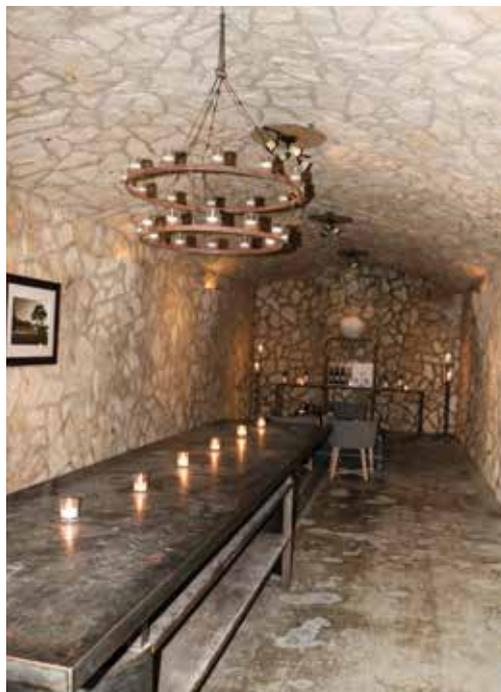
Once you’ve strolled the two blocks of art galleries and antique shops of Los Olivos, walk through the wisteria-laden front porch of the Wine Merchant Cafe for a long lunch. You’ll want to linger over the Mediterranean-inspired cuisine at this truly farm-to-table experience. In addition to sourcing ingredients from its own farm, the cafe has developed lasting relationships with many local organic farmers. It’s no wonder the restaurant has won Wine Spectator’s “Best Restaurants for

Wine” Award of Excellence. The walls are lined with more than 500 fabulous bottles of local and international vintages as well as owner Sam Marmorstein’s Bernat wines. Keep an eye out for the best produce of the season, and order that.

Taste

DEMETRIA WINERY AND VINEYARD

Some of the most picturesque wineries and vineyards line Foxen Canyon road, and Demetria is no exception. This stunning property biodynamically farms 56 acres of mostly Rhône varietals. Founded in 2005 by John Zahoudanis — who grew up on a farm near Mount Olympus in Greece where



his family cultivated olives, citrus and a small plot of grapes — the winery has a very Mediterranean feel. Tastings occur in a shady, pebbled courtyard with long farm tables. Bring your own lunch and sip from their many wines

SONJA'S SUMMER SANGRIA

- 1 bottle of Casa Dumetz Mourvèdre Cider
- 2 oranges, sliced
- 2 lemons, sliced
- 2 peaches, diced
- 2 splashes gin
- 1 cup lemon soda

> Pour everything except the lemon soda into a pitcher and stir well. Cover and chill for two hours. When ready to enjoy, pour into glasses with ice, top with a splash of lemon soda and extra sliced peaches. This recipe serves four.



— grenache rosé, syrah or a grenache, syrah, mourvedre blend — all afternoon while you look at rolling hills dotted with vines. There’s little formality, which makes it feel like a truly authentic experience.

FESS PARKER WINERY AND VINEYARD

Just down Foxen Canyon road is Fess Parker, the sprawling, lavish winery and vineyard that is known for some of the valley’s best wines. The late Parker purchased the 714-acre Foxen

Canyon Ranch in 1988 to run cattle, plant a few acres of vineyard and someday establish a small winery. His dream was to start a family business that he could pass on to future generations. Today, his wines have helped make Los Olivos a central hub for Santa Ynez Valley’s winemakers, and the winery is likely one of the most beautiful wineries in the area. Book the Enhanced Wine Tasting, themed and conducted on the private terrace. Make sure to try Marcella’s, a white wine referred to as the “party girl” and “breakfast juice.”



SUNSTONE VINEYARDS AND WINERY featured to the left will transplant you to a French countryside. S.Y. Kitchen offers great seasonal salads.

STORY OF SOIL

Once you’ve tasted at some of the larger wineries, head to the charming downtown Los Olivos area, lined with tasting rooms and breweries. There, winemaker Jessica Gasca is pouring Story of Soil, natural wines she carefully crafts from grapes sourced across the

valley. Gasca is making just 1,000 cases a year from grape clusters she handpicks. She focuses on minimal intervention, single varietals and single vineyards, which allows her to focus on “the place” the grapes are farmed and how each varietal is affected by the soil and microclimate of that place. Thus, the story of soil. Book a tasting with Gasca herself if you can grab her while she’s not busy working grapes. Her relaxed approach will make you feel like you are instant friends, all while she imparts her knowledge without being overwhelming.

BARBIERI WINE COMPANY

Across the street is the tasting room for Barbieri Wines and Kempe Wines, produced by husband-and-wife team Paolo Barbieri and Erin Kempe. Barbieri, a master sommelier, founded Barbieri Wines in 2005 after getting his start making small lots in his Las Vegas garage. Before that, he was in charge of buying millions of dollars in wine for Las Vegas restaurants (he helped open the Bellagio, Wynn and Cosmopolitan hotels). Kempe joined the Italian-born Barbieri in 2007 after meeting in Vegas (she worked with the likes of Hubert Keller, Rick Moonen and Wolfgang Puck). Today they work with local growers and use minimalistic techniques, without a heavy oak influence, to make their wines.

GLOBAL GARDENS

Take a break from the grape and book an olive oil tasting at Global Gardens. This family-run farm stand is known for its olive oils and natural fruit vinegars. Burned out from her graphic design career, owner Theo Stephan started her business more than 20 years ago with trees she imported from Crete. With the trees in her backyard, most of the olive harvest is grown on a three-acre plot of 5,000 trees in Los Alamos. Tasting tours will walk you through her varieties, from the peppery flavor of the hyperlocal Tuscan to the fruity taste of arbequina. Did you know you can use certain olive oils in pie crusts? You’ll leave the tasting with an expanded knowledge on how to cook with these oils and probably a few bottles, too.



SAVE SPACE: While you may be tempted to fill up on wine tastings, spots like S.Y. Kitchen offer creative cocktails and not-to-miss pasta dishes.



SANTA YNEZ

Do

THE JUICY LIFE YOGA STUDIO

Founder Kimberly Zimmerman leads a heated power yoga that will loosen you up and get your your blood flowing after days of tastings. Set in a dimly lit studio, the classes offer great music and just the right amount of heat (read: it’s not too hot). Afterward, cool off with a fresh-pressed juice she has made herself.

Eat

S.Y. KITCHEN

You might walk into your lunch fully expecting to have just one pineapple basil margarita at this breezy farmhouse-style restaurant. But then you get to talking to chef Luca Crestanelli about his passion for local produce, and then he brings over a winemaker friend, and you end up tasting a bunch of obscure wines from someone named Paul Lato and arrive late to your afternoon vineyard visit. This is the

charm of S.Y. Kitchen, a staple in town where you'll want to linger all afternoon or evening. Crestanelli offers modern Italian dishes that are almost entirely locally sourced. The Verona-born chef buys directly from growers like Finley Farms for the seasonal menu. Dishes are simple yet sophisticated, like spaghetti with saffron, clams and asparagus or a fresh-shucked pea and arugula salad.

Taste

SUNSTONE VINEYARDS AND WINERY

This beautiful family-owned boutique winery will transport you to the French countryside. Pack your lunch and enjoy a glass of wine in their stone courtyards as the fragrance of lavender and rosemary fills the air. Or, book a private tasting with one of their experts in their stone barrel-aging caves. Sunstone was founded in 1989 as one of the first organic vineyard estates in Santa Barbara County. Today, they still grow grapes without the use of herbicides, pesticides or synthetic fungicides. Situated on the edge of the Santa Ynez River, this sun-dappled vineyard will temporarily make you forget you're in California.

SOLVANG AND BUELLTON

Stay

THE ALISAL GUEST RANCH AND RESORT

There's no roughing it at The Alisal, a guest ranch and resort that dates to 1946. The charming retreat has been a hideaway for generations and still embraces the romance and majesty of the Old West. Wake up early for a horseback ride through misty hills to a cowboy-style breakfast of huevos rancheros, strong coffee and storytelling. Spend the day swimming in a mountain lake, hitting up the spa or cycling through wine country. On Wednesday nights throughout the summer, the Alisal hosts a traditional western barbecue

LOS OLIVOS WINE MERCHANT & CAFE SEED AND OAT GRANOLA

1/2 cup maple syrup
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup oats
1/2 cup flax
1/4 cup sesame
3 tablespoons sunflower seeds
2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds
1 egg white
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

> Heat oven to 350 F. Combine all ingredients and mix thoroughly. Spread the mixture out on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and scrape and toss the mixture around. Continue to bake until golden and still slightly sticky, 10 to 12 minutes more. Let cool.

ALISAL ROASTED TOMATO SALSA

4 medium tomatoes, halved
1 white onion, peeled and quartered
2 jalapeños, halved
4 garlic cloves, peeled
1 tablespoon olive oil, or more for cooking
1 chipotle pepper in adobo sauce
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon dried oregano
Juice of 1 lemon
1/2 cup water
1/2 bunch cilantro, chopped
Kosher salt and pepper, to taste

> Set oven to broil. Toss tomatoes, onions, jalapeños and garlic in olive oil and place on a metal baking pan. Broil until ingredients are blackened or deep golden brown in color. Transfer to a medium saucepan and add chipotle pepper, cumin, oregano, lemon juice and water. Bring to a boil for 3 minutes. Transfer to a blender, adding cilantro, salt and pepper. Blend until smooth. Cool and refrigerate.

at their own rodeo grounds with gourmet versions of baked beans, mac and cheese, potato salad and grilled meats. Spend just one night here, and you'll realize this place is so special that families come back every year and even the locals continue to play and eat here year after year.

Eat

THE HITCHING POST

For a taste of western barbecue and California pinot noir, head to the Hitching Post, made famous by the movie "Sideways." This family restaurant pioneered California Central Coast barbecue — often referred to as Santa Maria-style barbecue. The Ostini family has been grilling over an open fire of red oak since 1952. The Buellton Hitching Post (there are two locations) offers an indoor barbecue, staged behind glass, where guests can watch massive quantities of steaks and chops pass through the fire all night. Don't forget to taste the Hitching Post wines, made by owner Frank Ostini and his winery partner Gray Hartley.

Taste

BUTTONWOOD FARM WINERY AND VINEYARD

In the 1960s, Betty Williams set out to create a working farm based on good practices for people, animals and the earth. First there were horses, then organic vegetables and finally, in 1983, a vineyard. Using sustainable practices, her family stills operates the farm with a vineyard of more than 33,000 vines. The tasting room is surrounded by other bounty from the farm, including olives, pomegranates, peonies, herbs, summer vegetables and the farm's famous peaches. Custom artwork from their artist-in-residence graces the labels at the farm-to-table winery. Make sure to take home a bottle of Zingy, a crisp, fresh and sauvignon blanc that tastes just like its name.

Are you going?

The easiest way to get to the Santa Ynez Valley is to fly in and out of Santa Barbara. It's also the perfect excuse to spend a few days seaside. Make sure to check out our Santa Barbara guide for where to stay and eat at dishingj.com.



5720 WY 22, WILSON, WY | OPEN 6:00 AM - 9:00 PM | 307.733.3314 | @BASECAMP_WILSON @RATIONS_EATS

