

Introduction to Temecula Valley

Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country is synonymous with fine wines and exceptional hospitality. More than 30 wineries produce award-winning wines enhanced by a unique microclimate and well-drained decomposed granite soils. Temecula Valley's 1,500-foot elevation makes for cool summer nights, and delightful breezes come through the vineyards every afternoon throughout the summer.

Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country is located about 90 miles southeast of LA and less than 60 miles north of San Diego.

Winemaking began in Temecula Valley when the mission vineyards were established in 1820. In addition to growing award-winning Chardonnay, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc, more recently the wineries produce Mediterranean varietals like Viognier, Syrah and Pinot Gris. The remarkable success of these varietals has produced many awards and medals of excellence in domestic and international competitions.

Temecula Valley wineries and grape growers have learned to take advantage of their unique growing conditions. Wine quality mirrored by high awards in major wine competitions shows that Temecula Valley has become one of the preeminent wine grape growing areas in California.

Tasting rooms are open year round. Many of the wineries have delicatessens, full service restaurants and delightful gift shops. Enjoy a bottle of your favorite Temecula Valley wine while you savor the panoramic views of vineyards and countryside from one of the many scenic picnic areas. Temecula Valley is an easy drive from Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, and Palm Springs.

Temecula Valley AVA

The name Temecula is derived from the native American description for the "land where the sun shines through the mist."

The Temecula Valley AVA is an American Viticultural Area in southern Riverside County, California, part of the Inland Empire, one of the fastest growing areas in the country.

History

Over 200 years ago, winemaking made its debut in California at Mission San Juan Capistrano. The first winemakers were the mission padres. The tradition of winemaking still exists only 18 miles west of Temecula, where mission vineyards were established in 1820.

Vincenzo and Audry Cilurzo established the first modern commercial vineyard in the Temecula Valley in 1968. In the same year, Guasti-based Brookside

Winery planted its own vineyard. In 1971, Brookside produced the first wines from Temecula grapes at their Guasti winery. Callaway Vineyard and Winery began farming grapes in 1969, and opened the first Temecula Winery in 1974. Its founder, Ely Callaway went on to gain fame and fortune in the world of golf with his namesake company, Callaway Golf. John Poole's Mount Palomar Winery opened in 1975, and in 1978 the Cilurzos opened the third Temecula winery at a new site. Their original vineyard, Temecula's oldest, is now owned by Maurice Carrie Winery.

The United States Department of the Treasury Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau established the "Temecula AVA" in the Federal Register on October 23, 1984. The TTB renamed the same viticultural area "Temecula Valley AVA" effective June 18, 2004, approving an application made by the Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association. This is the only American Viticultural Area to change its name following initial approval. The Federal Register lists the official area for the Temecula Valley AVA at 33,000 acres. Approximately 1,300 acres are currently planted in commercial vineyards. Within the appellation there are 5,000 acres located in a "protected" area referred to as the Citrus/Vineyard Zone. This area is generally located in and around the Rancho California Road area. Riverside County guidelines strictly enforce number of acres needed to build a winery, lodging and other limited housing and commercial ventures.

Climate

Temecula Valley is located 500 miles south of San Francisco, resulting in a slightly higher angle to the sun and greater solar intensity. A look at the native chaparral shows that Temecula is in a relatively low rainfall region. These two factors create an early growing season that generally runs from March through September. Rains, however, rarely interrupt the harvest season, - an important factor in wine quality. Extensive research showed that the Temecula Valley was ideal for growing high quality wine grapes as mist often lingers until mid-morning on this 1,400-foot plateau, located below the peaks of the local mountain range. Significant cooling factors affect the flavor development of the grapes. As the sun warms the inland valleys east of Temecula, the air rises, forming a low-pressure area. The colder, much heavier air from the Pacific Ocean, just 22 miles from Temecula, is then drawn inland. The Coastal Mountain Range allows the colder air to pass inland through gaps and low spots. The Rainbow Gap and the Santa Margarita Gap are two of these low places in the mountains - and just beyond them lay Temecula Valley. The cool air flowing inland moderates the daytime temperatures and helps to create a pattern of warm sunny days and cool nights, ideal conditions for the best wine grapes.

Another meteorological factor affecting the valley's climate is the "lapse rate." It involves the altitude of the vineyard land and the height of the surrounding mountains. Temecula vineyards are located 1,400 feet to 1,600 feet above sea level. The surrounding mountains average 2,000 feet to nearly 11,000 feet elevation. These high elevations mean cooler air - a temperature drop of 3 °F

for every 1,000 feet of altitude gain. The heavy cold air that collects between the high peaks during the night drains off the heights much like water, joining cold moist air from the Santa Margarita River Channel to meander through the Temecula Valley, creating a double cooling effect. As a result, nighttime lows in and around Temecula are very cool. The cool nighttime temperatures are critical in developing high quality grapes.

Temecula Valley soils are another significant influence on wine quality. The soils are created from decomposing granitic materials and are excellent for growing high quality grapes. Grapevines require well-drained soils; they don't like their roots to be constantly wet. The granitic soils permit the water to drain through quite easily. Granitic soils are a light sandy loam. These soils contribute to clean, pure varietal flavors without odd or herbaceous flavors that wetter soil may cause.

Varietals

Since 1966, wine grapes have been grown. In addition to growing award-winning Chardonnay, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc, more recently the wineries produce Mediterranean varietals like Viognier, Syrah and Pinot Gris. The commercial success of these varietals has produced many awards and medals of excellence in domestic and international competitions. Temecula Valley's hotter climate is particularly well-suited to grapes such as the Rhône varietals, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Zinfandel. It's less well-suited to growing cooler-climate varietals, such as Pinot Noir.

Tourism

The popularity of Temecula Valley Wine Country and Pechanga Resort & Casino have been the driving forces in a four-fold increase in visitor spending in the valley from USD\$131 million in 2000 to an estimated USD \$538 million in 2006, according to a report released by the Temecula Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Temecula Valley is a huge tourist destination on weekends. Many of the wineries are on vast areas and many offer modern tasting rooms designed to service scores of people at once. Many also are wedding destination sites, host live music performances in the summer, offer bed and breakfast services, vineyard tours, sunset barbecues, and hot air balloon rides. The Temecula Valley Balloon & Wine Festival and the Harvest Wine Celebration are annual events.

Temecula Agricultural Conservancy

Riverside County, working with vineyard owners, in 2006 adopted a unique zoning ordinance which requires land to be set aside for vineyards and planted as residences are built.[citation needed]

Concurrently, Temecula Agricultural Conservancy (TAC), a 501 (c) (3) non profit public benefit corporation, was formed with the primary mission of preserving vineyards, and open space suitable for vineyards. TAC will work with the County

Supervisors as it implements the new zoning ordinance by holding open space, vineyards and/or conservation easements, ensuring that the land remains in vineyards in perpetuity.

TAC also works with vineyard owners who wish to voluntarily protect their vineyards with conservation easements in an effort to ensure that the vineyards remain. Conservation easements are used to preserve farmland and open space throughout the United States. An agricultural conservation easement recorded on vineyard land limits the future use of that land to vineyards in perpetuity, but the vineyard owner continues to own and farm the land. By donating a conservation easement to TAC, a vineyard owner can receive a charitable tax deduction. Grants provided by the California Farmland Conservancy Program are available to organizations like TAC. These grants can be used to purchase conservation easements from vineyard owners.