

Sonoma Coast and Monterey – an overview:

The **Sonoma Coast**, known for its wild and varied landscape, daily blanketing fog and broad range of well-drained soils (more than all of France put together) yields wines that are filled with **fruit, spice and floral** notes and are **firmly structured** over a **pronounced richness**—immediate classics in a playing field with *few* great classics.

Monterey, just beginning to hit its stride as a wine region, displays something altogether different. Fierce daily wind, rocky soils and one of the most moderate growing seasons in the state (the second-longest, behind the Santa Maria Valley) promote a **tropical, richly textured** quality in the Chardonnay and a distinct **earthiness** in the otherwise **fruit-driven** Pinot Noirs.

	SONOMA COAST	MONTEREY
Size	500,000 acres	35,758 acres
AVA ratified	1987	1984
Climate	Region I to low Region II < 2,501 – 2,750 *	Region I to low Region II < 2,501 – 2,750* <i>* Winkler & Amerine heat degree summation system</i>
Unique climate characteristics	Daily fog intrusion and the accompanying marine influence is the unifying factor in this immense AVA.	The ocean off Monterey Bay is deep and 50° F (cold even for CA). The cool air is drawn into the MO valley, which warms as it head south (beyond the vineyards). Wind is also a big factor here, inhibiting vine photosynthesis.
Sub-AVA's (partly or fully encompassed)	Russian River, Sonoma Carneros, Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Sonoma Valley, Chalk Hill	San Lucas, Santa Lucia Highlands, Arroyo Seco, San Benito, Chalone, Mount Harlan
Distinguishing features	A wildly varied landscape, with a cool climate as its unifying element. Features include rugged coastlines, winding river valleys & rolling hills that cascade into the SF bay.	Key geographic feature: the Salinas Valley, running north from the Monterey Bay to the south. Two mtn ranges form the E/W barriers (Gavilan and Santa Lucia); all the best vineyards are on benchlands on either side.
Soils	<i>Huge range.</i> Far Coast: rocky. Russian River: gravelly, alluvial. Carneros/Lakeville: Clay/loam. Formed through volcanic and seismic upheaval.	Gravelly, sandy loams. Primary parent material--decomposed granite. Formed through glacial movement and alluvial deposits.
Rainfall	<i>Huge variation:</i> 25 to 90 inches depending on location. The coastline sees much more moisture overall.	6 to 8 inches per year, which is seen as a bonus because of the ensuing control over irrigation. Salinas Valley has a giant aquifer running underneath, ensuring a plentiful water supply.

Benchmark Wineries & Negotiants for CH and PN	Chasseur, DuMol, Dutton-Goldfield, Failla, Flowers, Fort-Ross, Kosta-Browne, Kistler, Merry Edwards, Radio-Coteau, Siduri, Sonoma-Cutrer, Williams-Selyem	Bernardus, Brosseau Wines, Calera, Chalone, J. Lohr, Loring, Mer Soleil, Michaud, Morgan Winery, Pisoni Vineyard, ROAR, Robert Talbott, Siduri, Testarossa
Benchmark Growers for CH and PN	Annapolis, Camp Meeting Ridge, Dutton, Hirsch, Marcassin, Peay	Brosseau, Gary's, Pisoni, Rosella's, Vista Verde

WINE OVERVIEW

Many of the Sonoma Coast wines from the far or “true coast” are tight, very structured wines. Those made from a broad spectrum of sites—Carneros, Lakeville, the far coast and Russian River, for example, are more generous, but they still tend toward a sense of equilibrium and restraint.

In Monterey, the wines from the Gavilan mountains (Chalone and Mount Harlan) are naturally firmer in terms of structure. Those from the Santa Lucia Highlands are mostly riper and rounder (and have drawn rave reviews as of late from critics who admire that style). A whole different breed still is emerging from the well-drained benchlands along the east and west mountains, with a profile that's more delicate than either of the aforementioned versions.

VINEYARDS	SONOMA COAST CHARDONNAY	MONTEREY CHARDONNAY
Key Sources	Laughlin, Piner, Annapolis	Clark, Porter, Valley View
	SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR	MONTEREY PINOT NOIR
Key Sources	Laughlin, Piner, Annapolis, Dutton	Panorama, Porter

CHARDONNAY	SONOMA COAST	MONTEREY
Aromatic/Flavor Profile	Citrus, apple/pear, spice, floral. Classic character. Oak adds butterscotch and toast.	Ripe lemon, tropical (pineapple, green mango), floral. Oak adds vanilla and toast.
Structural Profile	Supple texture with firm acidity.	Juicy, with explosive acidity.
In a word	Classic, seamless character.	Exotic, juicy character.

PINOT NOIR	SONOMA COAST	MONTEREY
Aromatic/Flavor Profile	Cherry, wild strawberry, spice, minerals. Oak adds toast and spice.	Red and black plum, earth. Oak adds vanilla and spice.
Structural Profile	Seamless texture with a well-structured backbone.	Fleshy, with a lengthy finish.
In a word	Sleek and pretty.	Intriguing and earthy.

And now for a little fun...	SONOMA COAST	MONTEREY
Movie Star	Audrey Hepburn	Renee Zellweger
Car	Vintage Mercedes	Vintage Alpha Romeo
Mindset	Sophisticated	Bohemian