



The Wine Corner

Best wines of Santa Cruz Mountains

By Pierre DuMont

Tucked between the rugged Pacific coastline and the bustling tech corridors of Northern California, the Santa Cruz Mountains American Viticultural Area (AVA) stands as one of the state's most distinctive wine regions. Officially established in 1981, the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA was among the first American appellations to be defined by its mountainous terrain rather than political boundaries – a reflection of the dramatic landscape that shapes its wines.

Stretching across three counties – San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, and Santa Cruz County – the AVA rises from near sea level to elevations exceeding 2,600 feet. This variation creates a tapestry of microclimates, where cool ocean fog from the Pacific meets warm inland air. The result is a long growing season that allows grapes to ripen slowly, developing complexity while retaining natural acidity.

The region's history dates back to the 19th century, when pioneering winemakers first recognized its potential. Today, a mix of historic estates and small, family-run vineyards defines the area. Wineries such as Ridge Vineyards and Mount Eden Vineyards have helped cement the Santa Cruz world-class wines, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay.

Unlike the expansive valley floors of Napa or Sonoma, vineyards here are often carved into steep, forested slopes. This rugged topography limits large-scale production but rewards careful, hands-on viticulture. Many growers emphasize sustainable and

organic farming practices, working in harmony with the natural environment.

The wines themselves reflect this balance between power and restraint. Cabernet Sauvignons from the mountains tend to be structured and age-worthy, with notes of dark fruit, graphite, and mountain herbs. Pinot Noirs, influenced by the cooling maritime air, often display bright red fruit flavors, earthy undertones, and vibrant acidity. Chardonnays range from crisp and mineral-driven to richly textured, depending on site and winemaking style.

Despite its proximity to San Francisco and San Jose, the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA remains somewhat under the radar, offering a quieter, more intimate wine country experience. Narrow, winding roads lead visitors through redwood groves and scenic vistas, with tasting rooms that prioritize authenticity over grandeur.

As interest grows in terroir-driven wines and sustainable practices, the Santa Cruz Mountains continues to attract attention from wine enthusiasts and critics alike. For those willing to venture off the beaten path, this storied AVA offers a compelling glimpse into California winemaking at its most nuanced and expressive.

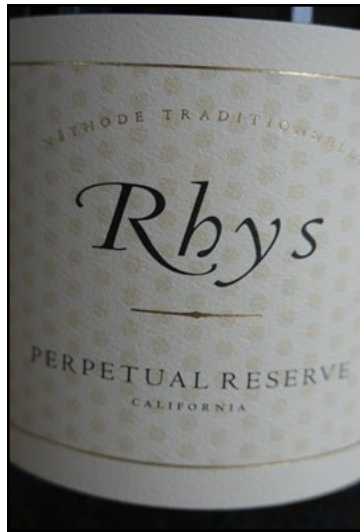
On March 29 the Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Growers Association put on a tasting at Mountain Winery in Saratoga. Over 50 wineries poured their current releases. It was a wonderful showcase for what the region can produce. There were many outstanding wines, but the following wines were the standouts – truly the cream of the crop.



The Santa Cruz Mountain AVA tasting was held at Mountain Winery.

White Wines

- **Rhys Perpetual Reserve**
This enchanting sparkling wine consists of wines from vintages 2016 to 2020 and was disgorged in April 2023. A deep bouquet of apple, apricot, pear and hazelnut emerges from the glass mingled with dried flowers, freshly baked bread and herbs. Medium-bodied, the palate is layered and fleshy, underpinned by ample reserves of chalky structuring extract, and concludes with a long, saline finish. This would certainly hold its own with a classic French Champagne like Bollinger or Taittinger.



The Rhys Perpetual Reserve is a blend of sparkling wines from 4 vintages.

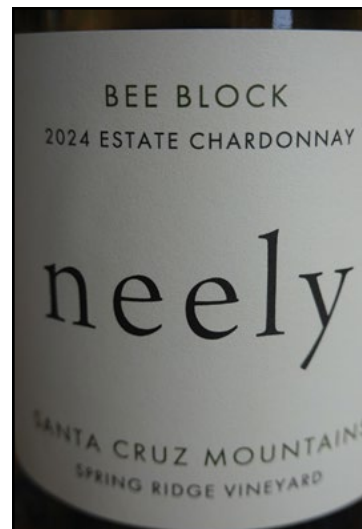
- **2021 Mount Eden Vineyards Chardonnay Reserve**
The Mount Eden Chardonnay shows a bright golden color with spicy notes of vanilla cream and orange peel that leads to apricot and melon flavors with hints of yeasty baked bread. The wine delivers a full-bodied texture without heaviness closing instead with good freshness that adds finesse and elegance to the finish.
- **2024 House Family Blanc de Noir of Pinot Noir**
This wine has just the tiniest hint of copper color. It has a lively, floral nose with a creamy backdrop that develops pleasant strawberry and herbal accents after a short while in the glass. The palate is slender and dex-

terous, culminating in an animated, mouthwatering finish. It is a lovely, rarely seen wine that should prove versatile at the table.

- **2024 M. Mathis Godello Guichard Vineyard**
Marty Mathis of Kathryn Kennedy Winery has produced a beautiful wine from the rare Spanish white grape Godello. It has a seductive nose of melon, pears and aromatic herbs, a hint of honeysuckle and beeswax. It's young and fresh, juicy and tasty, with an almost salty twist and a dry satisfying finish. The perfect partner to shellfish or seafood of any kind.

- **2024 El Vaquero Pinot Gris**
I was delighted to come across this underappreciated grape, a varietal usually found in Italy or Alsace. It leads with pear, apple and lemon scents with a hint of ginger. It is plush and soft yet bright and delicious – essentially everything one could want from the style. It is refreshing and delicious and would make a great aperitif. Drink over the next 3 years.

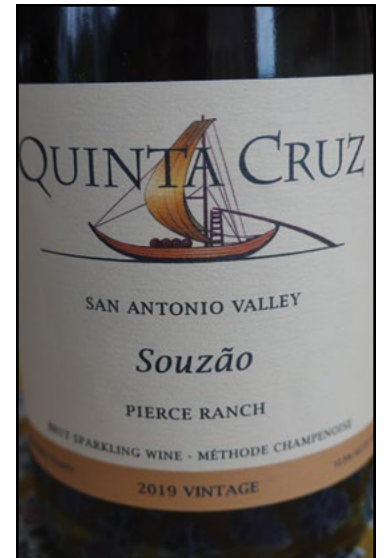
- **2024 Neely Chardonnay "Bee Block"**
The Neely Chardonnay has inviting aromas of apple, peach, lemon and spice. The full-bodied palate is concentrated and creamy. Its mouth-coating texture is balanced with bright acidity, and it has a long, spicy finish. Would be delicious with roast chicken.



The Neely Chardonnay is a good introduction to Santa Cruz Mountain whites.

Red Wines

- **2019 Quinta Cruz Sparkling Souzao**
Wow! This totally unusual wine made a huge impression. Souzao is an obscure grape from Portugal that is usually made into a still red wine. Jeff Emery from Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyards has made a sparkling version that jumps out of the glass. The nose is packed with cranberry fruit and warm baking spices. In the mouth it crackles with fizzy energy and ends up with a super clean totally dry finish. Totally unique this wine is truly a party in your mouth.



The Quinta Cruz sparkling Souzao is rare and unique.

- **2013 Martin Ranch Soulmate Nebbiolo**
Wow did not expect to come across a 13-year old Nebbiolo! The grape is rarely grown outside of its homeland of Northern Italy as it is geographically finicky. It also takes a long time for the tannins to mellow for it to be drinkable. This bottle is drinking perfectly. The wine is light and luminous offering lifted aromas of wild berry, rose, violet and tobacco. The mouthfeel is lean and to the point, but this is a true delight with interesting bottle-age aromas arising from the glass.

- **2022 Regan Pinot Noir**
The Regan Pinot Noir is red-fruited and spicy, layered with
See Wine Corner on page 28

**SPRING²
SOIRÉE²⁶**

**THE CANCER LEAGUE'S
PARADISE FOUND**

The trade winds are steering us back to the storied shores of **Trader Vic's** for **Spring Soirée 2026**. Sunset on the marina, tropical fare, and a curated boutique shopping experience at our pop-up **Paradise Found** await.

Join us for an evening of delectable pupus, umbrellas in your drinks, and a head start on shopping for Mother's Day, graduations, summer entertaining, and weddings.

Every treasure purchased supports our mission to *Seed the Cure* with 20% of all net profits directly funding early-stage, groundbreaking cancer research.

Thursday, April 23, 2026

5 p.m. - VIP Admission

6 p.m. - General Admission

9 p.m. - Ship out!

Trader Vic's

9 Anchor Drive, Emeryville

thecancerleagueinc.org/soiree26

Wednesday Walkers

Continued from page 23

immediately also faced challenges as the demand for water increased substantially in the early years of the 20th century. Ten years later, in 1916, the East Bay Water Company was incorporated and took over Peoples Water. But East Bay Water had problems too. Dissatisfaction with private water quality and costs led to public demand for a municipal system. In 1923, voters approved the creation of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and it purchased the East Bay Water Company in 1928.

The site of the former Linda Vista Reservoir is now a res-

idential area, and the walkers took a group photo in front of a home that is on the reservoir's old border. They then retraced their steps back to Linda Avenue and entered the Beach School playground. A large number of preschoolers were having fun and didn't seem to mind the walkers briefly invading their space.

The walkers exited the playground on the path above the new, beautifully rebuilt lot where other young people were having fun too. The group continued on past the empty pickleball courts that are closed on Wednesdays to a path that took them up to Howard and Oak-

land Avenues. The walkers made their return to the city center climbing up Oakland Avenue to Arbor Drive, Fairview, Dale, Jerome, and Magnolia Avenues for an on-time noon arrival back at the Exedra. The climb back up the hill was a bit of a challenge as the temperature rose, but sheading extra layers and a little breeze helped these hardened, veteran walkers meet it.

The Walking on Wednesdays group meets every Wednesday at the Exedra (Highland & Magnolia Avenues) at 10:30 a.m. Everyone is invited to join the group. There is no charge. New walkers and their friendly canine best friends are especially welcome. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/3ethkehu>.

Wine Corner

Continued from page 24

plums, cherry and black olive notes. In the mouth it is full-bodied and silky with a lovely round mouthfeel. The finish is long and complex with smooth tannins. Delicious now this will improve with a few years in the cellar.

- **2019 Clos de la Tech Domaine du Docteur Rodgers Pinot Noir**

This wine hails from a tiny one-acre vineyard in the foothills above Palo Alto that is planted to the Dijon clone. The winery holds their wine for five years before release resulting in a ready to drink perfectly aged wine. The wine is very Burgundian in style reminding me of a quality Gevry-Chambertin. It offers up aromas of exotic spices, raspberries, cherries and freshly turned earth. Medium to full-bodied, ample and fleshy, with good density and breadth this beautiful wine will last another decade or two in the cellar

- **2021 David Bruce Syrah Estate**

David Bruce was founded in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the early 1960s and was one of the first of the new generation of

wineries in the area. The wine shows luscious dark fruit, with blackberry layered with sweet spice and savory tones. It is round and full in the mouth and has medium-grained tannins on the finish.

- **2024 Madson Pinot Noir "Ascona"**

The Madson Pinot leads with cherry, star anise, hints of licorice and earth. It's a beauty. It is structured by savory tannins and extended nicely through the finish. There's abundant ripeness here, which emerges through the finish, but on balance, this is so fresh and detailed. A very pretty wine. Should easily improve for a decade in the cellar.

- **2021 Lester Family Pinot Noir "Domingo"**

The Lester Pinot Noir is earthy and floral on the nose, with rose, violets, peat, clove and anise aromas. The palate reveals a splay of soft tannins that contribute good firmness and structure. This is a smart, serious Pinot Noir, one worthy of the cellar for the future, but it will deliver immediate pleasure as well. Warmly recommended.

- **2023 Nicholson Sangiovese**

The Nicholson Sangiovese opens with a pleasant black cherry nose accented by dried flower, earth and plum aromas. The palate combines a suave, sleek core with quenching acidity and dusty tannins that carry through to the long chalky finish. This sumptuous wine cries out for a big plate of pasta.

- **2023 Bargetto Pinot Noir Regan Vineyard Reserve**

Bargetto is the oldest winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains having been founded in 1933. It's scented of red berry fruit, fennel, tobacco, spice and earth. Medium-bodied, it floods the mouth with bright berry flavors. It has an elegant frame of polished silky tannins and bright acidity and a long, nuanced finish. Drink it now and over the next decade.

- **2019 Kissed by an Angel Tempranillo**

The wine opens with a fragrant, expressive nose marked by lifted floral notes that rise above a dense, lush core of dark fruit and tobacco undertones. The palate is rich and chewy while retaining a measured, impressively nimble core. The finish is similarly rich yet perfectly balanced lingering with soft tannins on the finish.

owns the restaurant.

Ratatouille is a remarkable demonstration of the genius of Pixar Studios: its colors and textures are truly outstanding, and the story one that will delight the entire family, not just the little guys. It's an animated feature not to be missed.

Ratatouille. Directed by Brad Bird. With the voices of Patton Oswalt, Ian Holm, Lou Romano. Disney+/Pixar animation. 1hr 51min. Rated G. Now streaming on Disney+/Prime/apple tv/Fandango

over-the-top spaghetti western with a swashbuckling spirit that will entertain kids of all ages.

Rango. Directed by Gore Verbinski. Voices of Johnny Depp, Isla Fisher, Abigail Breslin. Animated. Rated PG. 1hr 45min. Streaming on Prime/apple tv/YouTube

help. They go through the kitchen dishwasher to get clean, and then assist Remy/Linguini in getting a superb meal together, acting as the creators of delicious sauces.

And, not surprisingly, Anton Ego does return, only this time gives the restaurant a glowing review.

Indeed, the story gets a bit complicated by the discovery that Linguini is actually Gusteau's abandoned son, which brings up the question of who actually

homage, however indirectly, to the film *Chinatown*.

Of course, there are more adventures for Rango (he and Bean get locked in the bank's vault). But in the end, consider it a fun, sophisticated, sometimes

Piedmont Community Meditation Group

Offering both in-person and online options

Wednesday morning - Piedmont Center for the Arts

9:00 am - 10:00 am

\$5.00/class through Piedmont Recreation Department

Wednesday evenings - online

7:30 pm - 8:15 pm

Free

No experience needed ~ Drop ins always welcome ~ Ages 18+

For more info and zoom link:
Mark Herrick - herrickmark@icloud.com ~ (415)706-2000

Sudoku Puzzle

Sudoku by Myles Mellor

	4							
		8			7	3		2
			8				4	
				3	1	2		
7						4		
5		1			9	6	3	
			9					
	1					8		5
2		4	6		5	1		

Crossword Puzzle

Foods, mostly by Myles Mellor

1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	
12				13			14		15				
16				17					18				
19			20					21					
22						23							
24				25	26	27		28		29	30	31	32
			33				34				35		
36	37	38						39	40	41			
42							43						
44				45	46	47		48			49	50	51
				52				53			54		
				55	56				57	58	59		
60	61						62					63	
64							65					66	
67								68				69	

- ACROSS**
- 1. WWII general Arnold
 - 4. Eeyorean in demeanor
 - 7. Israel's Dayan
 - 12. Lyricist Gershwin
 - 13. Arduous journey
 - 15. Vendor
 - 16. Loan figure, abbr.
 - 17. Hybrid fruit
 - 18. Elite groups
 - 19. Breakfast choice
 - 22. Sensory input
 - 23. This and that
 - 24. Jai alai balls
 - 28. Big name in Formula One racing
 - 33. Chasers
 - 35. Taurus or Focus
 - 36. An old-timer
 - 42. Unquestionable
 - 43. Snow or Canadian
 - 44. Compact carrier
 - 48. NBC logo
 - 52. Runner Zatopek
 - 54. Throb
 - 55. Italian loaf
 - 60. Jury, often
 - 62. Opening
 - 63. H.S. subject
 - 64. Thicker
 - 65. Not crazy
 - 66. Formerly
 - 67. Long-necked instrument
 - 68. Morning drops
 - 69. D and C, in D.C., e.g.
 - DOWN**
 - 1. Billboard genre
 - 2. Covered way
 - 3. CHI's part
 - 4. Theatergoer's souvenir
 - 5. Jason's ship, in myth
 - 6. Eatery
 - 7. Shooting star
 - 8. Russian figure skater
 - 9. Cinder
 - 10. Goes with haw
 - 11. Hosp. units
 - 14. Fruit weight in EU
 - 15. Miss Hawkins of Dogpatch
 - 20. Went down in value
 - 21. North pole pixie
 - 25. Craggy peak
 - 26. Do-say link
 - 27. Prevalent ID
 - 29. Indy entry
 - 30. North Sea diver
 - 31. Travellers info
 - 32. Physicist's study
 - 34. Taunt
 - 36. Theoretical extreme
 - 37. Prefix denoting mouth
 - 38. Shining light
 - 39. "Law & Order" role
 - 40. Turn over
 - 41. O.T. book
 - 45. Oregon State mascot
 - 46. Jewelry material
 - 47. 1980s supermodel
 - 49. A whole lot
 - 50. Swiss Alp's abode
 - 51. Anchors
 - 53. Former Fords
 - 55. Piece of a buck
 - 56. Faust in "Mission: Impossible: Rogue-Nation"
 - 57. Frog's relative
 - 58. First-rate
 - 59. Moonshine
 - 60. N.F.L. scores
 - 61. Early Chinese dynasty

ADVERTISE IN THE POST

See Crossword and Sudoku Puzzle Solutions on page 29