



MENDOCINO

AMERICAN WINE REGION OF THE YEAR

Setting a model for sustainable growth with increasing wine quality and more widespread availability.

In very few places can you find the level of quality coupled with the accessibility that you'll discover here. In even fewer can you sip wine against the backdrop of a redwood forest while simultaneously breathing in fresh ocean air. Add in the level of commitment to preserving this singular place for future generations and there is no place quite like Mendocino, the wine region reputed as California's greenest AVA.

And facts are facts: 25% of Mendocino's planted acreages are certified organic—increasingly regenerative organic—and are responsible for one-third of the organic acres in the entire state.

"Those of us who live here know what a special place this is," says Elizabeth Archer, communications manager at Bonterra Organic Estates and marketing chair for Mendocino Winegrowers. "But," she adds, "we have very famous neighbors and we are sometimes overlooked. Yet it's that aspect that makes us a hidden gem."

The Mendocino AVA itself spans over 275,000 acres and includes both the warmer inland



but there's not a lot of ego behind it."

Indeed, many of the people who work and live within Mendocino are either multigenerational residents or came and fell in love with the region. "Even in the larger wineries," says Archer, pointing toward Bonterra, Goldeneye, Roederer as examples, "even there, the people working in the field, cellar or behind the bar are often locals."

"I'm a transplant, but when I came here, as I drove in, I started crying. I just felt so at peace, that I belonged. You hear a lot of stories like that all over the county," she says.

Of the American Wine Region Wine Star Award, Archer comments that the community is excited at the prospect of more folks experiencing everything Mendocino has to offer. "There's a different vibe here. It's casual, friendly; you could be tasting in a barn with dirt floors and the winemaker will be the one pouring and joining you at your table. It sounds cheesy, but Mendocino really is magical."

—Stacy Briscoe

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area as one drives north from Sonoma up 101 as well as the more coastal-influenced western portion, if one splits off onto 128 toward the Pacific Ocean. As a consequence, this vast AVA produces everything from hardy quality Cabs and rustic Italian reds just as well as delicate Pinot Noirs (for which Anderson Valley is renowned) and aromatic whites—and everything in between.

Terroir aside, it is the community of people that truly makes this gem shine. The region is home to small-lot growers, winemakers and other agricultural businesses who, as Archer describes, have "a lot of pride, but not a lot of pretension." She adds, "Our winemakers and growers want to ensure they're doing their best because they take pride in their work and a job well done,

COURTESY OF PENNYROYAL FARM