

# The 52 California wineries you need to visit in 2020

By Esther Mobley | Posted on: 01/07/2020

From Santa Barbara to the Sierras, Humboldt to Temecula, California has wineries – and tasting rooms – at seemingly every turn. Now more than ever, you can count on finding solid, well-made wine at almost all of them. But with wine prices and tasting fees creeping ever higher, it can be hard to know which ones are actually worth the money.

What's more, it can be hard to know what you're getting yourself into: Is this an appointment-only palace with exhaustive, guided tastings (and an expectation that you'll buy a few cases at the end)? Is this an overcrowded tasting bar where you'll have to jostle your way to the front of the hordes every time you want another sip?

It's a lot to consider before you set out for a drive to wine country. That's where we come in at The Press and The San Francisco Chronicle. Together, our team of wine experts has visited hundreds of wineries and evaluated the tasting experiences – not only the quality of the wine (though that's key, of course), but also the vibe of the tasting itself and the value for the money.

The 52 wineries on this list represent the best of a dynamic landscape. Now in its third year, this list is more expansive than ever before, thanks to the hard work of our team: During the past 12 months, on The Press, we explored [Santa Barbara County](#), [Paso Robles](#), [Lodi](#) and [Amador County](#), which added to our database of tasting room reviews from [Napa Valley](#), [Sonoma County](#), [Mendocino County](#), the [Santa Cruz Mountains](#), [Monterey County](#) and the [East Bay](#). From all of those regions, we've culled a collection of wineries that achieve some mysterious nexus of quality, value and fun. Whether you're a geeky wine collector or you're just planning your friend's bachelorette party, we believe there's truly something for everyone here.

The Press' team of wine experts is led by me, Esther Mobley, and includes Mike Dunne, Virginie Boone, Matt Kettmann, Chris Macias, Sara Schneider, Tim Teichgraeber and Bryce Wiatrak. All of our work contributed to this feature.

— *Esther Mobley, Chronicle wine critic*

# NAPA VALLEY

## Bouchaine



John Storey / Special to The Chronicle

**Bouchaine** has always been a great stop in **Carneros**, that wine region near the south end of Napa County, and it just got even better with the completion of a big new visitor center in the fall of 2019. The 5,000-square-foot building is shaped like a semi-circle, its facade incorporating recycled redwood. Reservations are encouraged, and new experiences include a guided tasting of five wines on the new firepit-dotted terrace (\$50), though guests looking for something more casual can still enjoy a \$20 flight in the old tasting room. A concert series is planned for the future – Bouchaine’s owners are big patrons of the arts – and the winery still offers occasional dog hikes, vineyard strolls and even falconry classes. Behind all those bells and whistles is a lineup of solid, beautifully made Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and other wines.