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You've probably heard of California's wine country as a favorite destination visited by some of your coup

We've always known that dating and wine drinking are a complementary match, and now we're seeing a growing interest in these pairings with websites like WineLoversMatch.com, WineSocials.com and even SinglesandWine.com in Austin, TX.

What we found in Sonoma County and the Napa Valley is that the wine industry has gotten younger and livelier over the years—and boy, do those locals know how to have a good time! Read on for tips on where to eat and drink, what to do, and where to stay in the Sonoma County and Napa Valley regions.

### **SONOMA FOR SINGLES**

#### **Top Places to Wine and Dine**

Take a drive along the Sonoma Coast. Stop in the Gourmet Au Bay wine shop in Bodega Bay for wine flights and snacks on the deck overlooking the Bay. This little wine and gift shop is a nice place to pick up a few specialty wine bottles for the rest of your trip, and mingle on the deck while listening to music Sunday afternoons.

For a wine bar with unexpectedly great food, visit Willi's Wine Bar in Santa Rosa, a smaller bar where you'll meet locals who keep coming back for the ambiance, variety of wines, and small plates menu. All of the wines are available in 2 oz servings and the menu has a great mix of

interesting international dishes

In Downtown Sonoma, The Girl and the Fig is a bar and restaurant known for its seasonal Provencal-inspired cuisine and “Rhône-Along Wine Lists.” The patio is a noteworthy place to people-watch while sipping wonderful wines and sampling small plates and cheeses.

The Depot Restaurant is a local’s favorite Italian restaurant in Downtown Sonoma known for its homemade salumi and charcuterie, handmade pasta, and fresh ricotta. Their cooking classes throughout the year are a good way to learn new techniques while meeting some Sonoma locals.

### **Things to See and Do in Sonoma**

If you want to learn more about how your wine goes from vine to bottle, check out St. Francis Winery in Santa Rosa for their “wine-cation” tour, an exclusive production and wine library tour. For only \$25 a person, it’s like going on a fun factory tour for adults and ends with a tasting in St. Francis’ Library Cave. The staff at St. Francis are so personable, we felt like old friends drinking with our tour guides, Michael McNeil and Westley Wallinger, by the time we left. McNeil, a Sonoma single himself, gave us a list of his favorite bars in Downtown Sonoma, including:

Murphy’s Irish Pub: Great beers and tasty Irish food, live music, and trivia nights

The Swiss Hotel: A good place to sit outside and people watch

Steiners: A sports bar with live music from local bands and karaoke nights

Town Square: Cheap drinks, fun crowds that tend to skew younger on the weekends

The Harmony Lounge at the Ledson Hotel: A low-key lounge with a nice selection of wines and cocktails

If you want to do tastings in Downtown Sonoma, it’s best to start earlier in the day since most wine shops and tasting rooms close by 6 p.m. during the weekdays. There are plenty of tasting rooms, lots of shopping, and a gorgeous little park in the middle of the plaza for lounging and people-watching.

### **Where to Stay**

Located conveniently in Downtown Sonoma on the Sonoma Plaza, the El Dorado Hotel is a modern hotel that provides balcony views of the plaza or courtyard. Meet new people on Friday nights when they offer a complimentary wine tasting in the lobby featuring wineries from the El Dorado Kitchen wine list. The El Dorado Kitchen (EDK), located on the first floor of the hotel, showcases a sophisticated, yet approachable menu of seasonal foods and a variety of cocktails. Locals and tourists come here for great drinks and apps in the cocktail area or poolside.

The Swiss Hotel is a great place to stay for singles with the popular Swiss Hotel bar right downstairs and it’s location on the plaza makes it easy to spend late nights at the local bars and not have far to travel on the way home.

The Hampton Inn & Suites in Rohnert Park is nice midrange hotel that’s conveniently located at

the Gateway to Wine Country, right off of Rte US 101, just a short drive from Sonoma's wineries and the Pacific Coast. Grab a complimentary Hampton's On the Run breakfast bag on weekdays before embarking on a day of wine tasting.

If you're looking for a resort experience, The Lodge at Sonoma Renaissance Resort & Spa, right off of the main highway Rte 12, is perfect for staying, playing, and pampering. Enjoy a delicious meal in their restaurant, the Carneros Bistro & Wine Bar, with a few glasses from their varied wine list. Achieve complete relaxation in their full-menu Raindance Spa. Browse their hotel packages to get the best deal for the experiences you want to focus on; whether it's a girlfriends' getaway, spa specials, biking tours, culinary treats, and more.

## NAPA FOR SINGLES

### Top Places to Wine and Dine

Ubuntu (Downtown Napa): This new Michelin-rated vegetarian restaurant featuring complex, artistic dishes is worth making a reservation for. It's been said that their menu is so good, you "won't miss the meat."

Downtown Joe's Brewery and Restaurant (Downtown Napa): This casual microbrewery is the perfect spot to meet local guys and gals unwinding after the workday with a few beers and their friends. It's the perfect place to go when you need a break from wine and fancy food and want to kick back with a burger and brew.

Hurley's (Yountville): This is a great spot for a tasty lunch or dinner and fabulous wine pairings to match. One of Hurley's signature dishes—that we tried and loved—is the Braised Wild Texas Boar. The bar is a favorite amongst local winemakers and opens up to a beautiful outdoor patio. Executive chef and owner Bob Hurley makes each customer feel like guests in his home by

walking around the restaurant and giving a warm welcome to diners as often as he can.

Bouchon (Yountville): Thomas Keller's French bistro is a much more casual locale than its famous neighbor, French Laundry, but emphasizes traditional dishes and fine wines in a home-like atmosphere. Don't forget to stop by the Bouchon Bakery next door for amazing pastries and fresh bread.

### **Must-See Places to Visit and Things to Do**

You could easily spend all day, every day, of your vacation doing vineyard tours and tastings and not even get bored. But we know Single Edition readers like to try new adventures so we found more activities for you to sample in Napa.

For a different way of experiencing Napa, stretch your legs on a bike ride like the ones offered by Napa Valley Bike Tours. Their tours range from a few hours, to an entire day, or a 4-night vacation! They have guided tours (some that include delivered food and wine) and self-guided options where they'll even drop a bike off at your hotel.

We know you'll appreciate the awe and beauty of an adventure like a hot air balloon ride. Yes, there are better discounts for having more people in your party when reserving your spot, but the breathtaking views of wine country from above are likely going to be worth the extra cash. Check out Balloons Above the Valley for rides that end with a Champagne brunch along the Napa River.

The Napa Valley Wine Train is a fun excursion if you're traveling with friends and want to see the Napa valleys and vineyards from the comfort of this old-fashioned train. Their lunch and dinner menus are an excellent highlight of the trip, but we recommend bringing your favorite bottles on the train with you if you plan to have more than a glass or two of wine--just be prepared to pay a corkage fee.

After the Napa Valley Wine Train, browse The Oxbow Public Market, a local food gallery offering a variety of delicious eateries, treats, and live music on certain nights.

For an easy way to sample a variety of vineyards on foot, pick up the Napa Downtown Wine Tasting Card for \$20 and enjoy 10-cent tastings in 14 rooms.

If you have enough time and want to learn more about wine or sharpen your cooking skills, plan a visit to the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena for Culinary and Wine

Enthusiast classes by yourself or with friends. Whether you have two hours—or a whole weekend—there’s a lot you can learn and wonderful people to meet. Make sure you visit the Wine Spectator restaurant for wonderful food and drinks at affordable prices. You can sit at the bar, in the restaurant, or on the outdoor patio overlooking the Napa Valley. In the summertime, the outdoor bar here is a popular spot amongst locals.

Calistoga is a great town for enjoying live music. Whether you want to hear jazz, swing, blues, rock, and more, Calistoga should be on your go-to list for a small town that packs an entertainment punch. Find out who’s playing when you’ll be in town. Calistoga is also known for its geysers, hot springs, and state parks, so bring comfortable shoes and plan to spend some time experiencing the beauty this area has to offer.

Unwind at the Lavender Hill Spa in Calistoga where they offer bath treatments and massages. We recommend their “volcanic mud bath” made with volcanic ash from the local geysers and infused with lavender. It’s a detoxifying and muscle relaxing experience that ends with a foot massage. You can follow the bath with one of their many massages or skin treatments. Learn more about Calistoga’s hot springs spa services and mineral baths [here](#).

Visit the sparkling wine powerhouse, Domaine Chandon, in Yountville for tours of their beautiful grounds and a fun tasting room that is often crowded later in the day. Our ambassador, Kristen Brott, told us that this is a popular place for the Napa locals to stop by and meet up with friends for a few tastings once they’re done work for the day. Chandon is known in the Napa community for throwing fabulous parties and events throughout the year; check out their website to see what’s going on when you’ll be in town.

### **Where to Stay**

Hotel Luca (Yountville): This hotel has contemporary designs but an old-world Italian feel. The rooms each feature outdoor terraces with gorgeous Italian accents throughout. You can relax at the outdoor pool and bar, get pampered at the Luca Spa, and dine at Cantinetta Piero, the hotel’s restaurant and pizza bar. This hotel even offers two full-furnished residences if you’re staying for 30 days or more.

The Bardessono (Yountville): This modern luxury hotel is LEED Platinum-certified and completely innovative with its use of green technology, design, and amenities while maintaining lavish standards. This hotel also has the Bardessono restaurant and bar, and a full-service spa with the option of experiencing services from the comfort of your hotel room. The Bardessono's rooftop pool with Napa Valley views is a fantastic place to socialize, whether it's at the bar, while enjoying a slice from the outdoor pizza oven, or during one of the summer cocktail parties when a DJ is up there cranking out music.

Embassy Suites Napa Valley Hotel (Napa): This is a nice mid-range hotel that's within walking distance of Downtown Napa and is close to plenty of wineries and activities. The amenities include an indoor and outdoor pool, a Jacuzzi, a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast each day, and the Manager's Reception every night from 5:30 to 7:30 where you can get beer, wine, cocktails and snacks.

The River Terrace Inn (Napa): A luxury boutique hotel located in the heart of the Napa Valley, overlooking the Napa River. Most of the rooms have balconies where you can relax and catch the sunset. This hotel offers plenty of spa services, including the opportunity to indulge from the comfort of your hotel room.

### **Other Places to Meet Cute Locals**

More organizations for local young professionals who live or work in the area are popping up regularly. There's a young professionals' network in Napa called EDGE where people can Engage, Develop, Gather, and Enjoy. The Sonoma Valley has a Chamber of Commerce website with a Sonoma Young Professionals section that includes happenings and social events for locals—and tourists! These sites—and their Facebook pages!--are worth checking out for finding more fun places to meet people and get a taste of what the area has to offer.