



Coastal Charmer

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Wine, waves, and world-class cuisine— Northern California's Mendocino County has it all

Magical Mendocino County lies just to the north of Napa and Sonoma counties. But while its neighbors reap worldwide renown, it has managed to remain somewhat off the beaten path. With dozens of its own successful vineyards, the large coastal region is in many ways like a wilder, more beautiful cousin to the better known Napa and Sonoma areas.

She wears thousands upon thousands of rolling acres of pinot noir, chardonnay, and zinfandel grapes and is notable for the sparkling wines produced within her borders. Her merits hardly stop there, however; they also include a stunning coastline, redwood forests, and residents keenly interested in slow food, organic farming, and low-impact living. In

addition, Mendocino County is brimming with artists, and her namesake village lures affluent baby boomers seeking a halcyon respite from their lives.

The county has eleven different appellations, or districts with protected names in which its grapes are grown. A quick check of the bottles in your own wine collection might reveal some of them, like Ukiah, Potter, McDowell, Sanel, and Redwood valleys; Mendocino Ridge; Cole Ranch; Dos Rios; and Covelo. Mendocino is classified as a "Region 1" growing area, the coolest climate in which grapes can be commercially grown. Cool morning fog rolls in from the coast but is quickly burned off by the day's heat in summer. The pairing of cold air and hot sun during growing season allows grapes to mature slowly.

by Libby Boren McMillan

TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC FOLTZ; BOTTOM PHOTO BY BRIAN STROMLUND

Mendocino County is classified as a "Region 1" growing area, the coolest climate in which grapes can be commercially grown; in addition to its wine, the county is also known for its dramatic natural beauty and top-notch restaurants (opposite).



