

# NOSH TOWN

by Claudia Schou

## DID THE PANDEMIC CANCEL YOUR SUMMER WINE ADVENTURE? THESE LOCAL WINERIES WILL MAKE YOU FORGET YOUR SUMMER WOES.

It's no surprise that many local wineries are seeing an influx of visitors who cancelled travel plans to wine regions around the globe because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Stop whining and start planning. Santa Barbara is known for its world-class Syrah, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay. But you'll also find Bordeaux, Rhône-style wines, and Spanish varietals. Tasting rooms have recently opened their doors again for business with limited seating, mask requirements, and social distancing. Most require reservations in advance, and some require health screenings prior to entry. So while you might be yearning to sip and eat your way through Europe or South America, just remember there are more than 200 wineries throughout our region that can take us there in spirit. Here's a list of some of our favorites.

### ZACA MESA WINERY & VINEYARDS

Those yearning to be in the Rhône Valley this summer can take comfort in Zaca Mesa Winery & Vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley AVA. The winery offers high quality Rhône-style wines and varietals such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Cabernet on 150 acres of postcard-worthy estate vineyards, open with reservations only and social distancing practices in place. Tasters can choose from a variety of flights and relax at picnic tables under the oak trees amidst its Grenache Blanc vineyards. Here, you'll find a selection of wines by the flight, glass and bottle, including Rhône favorites such as Grenache, Mourvedre, Viognier and Syrah. Prices: From \$15 for a flight to \$75 for a bottle. Tastings are complimentary with purchase of bottled wine.

Info: 6905 Foxen Canyon Road, Los Olivos (805) 688-9339

### CROWN POINT

Dedicated to Bordeaux grape varieties, Crown Point is situated on a 104-acre ranch in the foothills of Happy Canyon in the Santa Barbara AVA. Up to six guests can enjoy a private tour of the winery and barrel rooms along with a vineyard tour in a four-seat utility vehicle. Round out the day with a wine and cheese pairing, featuring current vintages of the 2014 Estate Selection, 2016 Estate Selection and 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon. A trio of creamy local and European cheeses is elegantly packaged in a clear plastic to-go container, perfect for reserving until later. Prices range from \$100 per person for a winery tour and tasting to \$225 per person for a winery tour and private tasting with winemaker **Simon Faury**. Tours are by appointment only.

Info: 1733 Fletcher Way, Santa Ynez, (805) 693-9300



Crown Point offers a winery tour and private tasting with winemaker Simon Faury

### BABCOCK WINERY

Vinyl records from the '70s, vintage photos, antler chandeliers, mid-century décor, and vintage board games make Babcock Winery's hangar-sized "retro-rock-and-roll" tasting room a cool, hip spot to savor a glass of wine. In pandemic times, however, most of the fun takes place outdoors, where up to 35 guests can sip wines and soak up the good vibrations. Babcock's lineup of ethereal wines ranges from delicate whites to robust reds. The 2018 Ultra Late Harvest Viognier and 2018 Petit Verdot Rosé are standouts. Guests can pair charcuterie and cheeses with wines by the glass or bottled selections. Note the property's new landscape of 1,000 oak trees, numerous succulents, and an array of wildflowers and milkweed. Go for the wine, and be sure to take in the beauty that surrounds you. Prices: Tastings range from \$22 to \$30.

Info: 5175 CA-246, Lompoc (805) 736-1455



Babcock Winery has a new landscape of 1,000 oak trees, numerous succulents, and an array of wildflowers and milkweed



A casual outdoor tasting at Buttonwood Winery & Vineyard in Santa Ynez includes five wines in self-pour carafes and a view of the natural gardens, peach orchard, and the hop yard

### BUTTONWOOD WINERY & VINEYARD

Malbec is a favorite at Buttonwood Winery & Vineyard in Santa Ynez Valley, where a casual outdoor tasting includes five wines in self-pour carafes and a view of the natural gardens, peach orchard, and the hop yard. The winery produces about 8,000 cases per year of estate-grown wine, including dry, full-bodied Malbec (2016 and 2017 vintages), chock full of blackberry jam notes, with toasty nuances and pretty acidity. The 90-minute tastings are by appointment only. Prices: Tastings start at \$15, a bottle of Malbec is \$28.

Info: 1500 Alamo Pintado Road, Solvang 805-688-3032

### VINO VAQUEROS

Forget about the flight and hotel reservation refund that hasn't posted to your bank account with a Vino Vaquero horse ride and wine tasting. Visit their bountiful Estelle Ranch, a 1,000-acre sprawl of rolling hills boasting scenic vineyard, mountain, and valley views. The big, white rustic stable houses 12 well-bred quarter horses that are a perfect fit for every experience level. After your ride, stretch your legs before you sit down and savor tastings of Albariño, Rose, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc from local estates and Estelle's signature Cabernet, followed by a complimentary glass of your favorite selection. Bring your own appetizers and snacks to pair with these delicious vintages. There's even a fridge in the tack room to store cold items. Prices: \$150 per person, two-person minimum. 75-90 minute rides.

Info: 2178 Mora Avenue, Santa Ynez (805) 944-0493



After your horse ride, Vino Vaqueros offers tastings of Albariño and Rose from local estates.

### MARTIAN RANCH & VINEYARD

An eclectic grower of Rhône and Spanish grape varieties, Martian Ranch & Vineyard uses biodiversity to produce some of the most noteworthy wines at its estate winery, situated along the Foxen Canyon Wine Trail in Los Alamos. The vineyard produces Albariño, Viognier, Grenache Blanc, Grenache Noir, Gamay Noir, Cabernet Franc, Mourvedre, Syrah, and Tempranillo. Martin Ranch's Albariño thrives in the dry soils and creates a fruity and floral medium-bodied wine. The winery offers tours that focus on how biodiversity is used for grape production. Prices: \$15 for tastings and up to \$80 for tours.

Info: 9110 Alisos Canyon Road, Los Alamos, (805) 344-1804

### FOLDED HILLS

This boutique winery boasts a chic and sophisticated tasting room in the 1898 ranch house as well as abundant outdoor space for guests to enjoy its limited-production Rhône varietal wines. The winery's response to the pandemic eschews crowding by offering small-group private tasting experiences that appeal to wine lovers' senses at various locations around the expansive property. Each experience includes a wine tasting with a personal concierge in a setting of your choosing. Chandelier Barn Experience, Vineyard Retreat, Escape to the Lake, and Mi Casa Es Su Casa are a few. One highlight is meeting the ranch's four-legged residents, including pigs, goats, donkeys, and camels. Need to know: Up to eight guests per wine tasting. Reservations are required. For those who want to stay local, the winery runs a charming outpost on Coast Village Road in Montecito.

Montecito Tasting Room: 1294 Coast Village Road, Montecito, (805) 694-8086, ext. 2

Folded Hills Tasting Room at the Homestead: 2323 Old Coast Highway, Gaviota (805) 694-8086, ext. 1

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