

Napa Valley American Viticultural Area and Nested AVAs



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The Diversity of the Napa Valley AVA

Napa Valley stands for wines of the highest quality, cultivated with excellence in one of the world's most extraordinary places. The Napa Valley was California's first AVA, or American Viticultural Area, recognized by the U.S. government in 1981. An AVA is a legally designated grape growing area possessing distinguishable characteristics such as climate, terrain, soils and cultural and historic significance. In order for a wine to be labeled with a specific AVA, at least 85% of the grapes must be sourced from that AVA.

The Napa Valley produces just 4% of California's and .4% of the world's winegrape harvest. It has a dry Mediterranean climate—shared with only 2% of the world's surface, which is ideal for producing consistent wines from vintage to vintage. Napa Valley has 17 nested AVAs, each possessing distinct attributes. The sheer number of AVAs within Napa Valley speaks to the region's diversity, allowing winemakers to produce a wide range of wines in an array of styles.

LOS CARNEROS

Climate: Cool, with marine winds from the San Pablo Bay as well as the Petaluma Gap to the west; high temperatures rarely exceed 80° (27°C).

Elevation: Sea level–700 feet (213 m)

Principal varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Merlot

COOMBSVILLE

Climate: Weather is moderated by its proximity to the San Pablo Bay. Daily average high temperatures can be as much as 10 degrees cooler during the hot months than most other AVAs, and heat spikes tend to be less severe.

Elevation: 100–1000 feet (30–305 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Syrah and Pinot Noir

WILD HORSE VALLEY

Climate: Due to elevation and proximity to San Pablo Bay, it is the coolest of all the Napa AVAs. The air mass that passes over Carneros cools another 10 degrees by the time it rises to the AVA.

Elevation: 850–2130 feet (259–650 m)

Principal varieties: Pinot Noir and Chardonnay

MOUNT VEEDER

Climate: Cool to moderate, with most vineyards above the fog line, meaning warmer nights and cooler days than on the valley floor; typical summer highs are 85° (29°C).

Elevation: 500–2600 feet (152–792 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel and Chardonnay

OAK KNOLL DISTRICT OF NAPA VALLEY

Climate: Moderate to cool, with marine air and fog often remaining until late morning; afternoon breezes maintain slightly cooler temperatures than in the upper valley; summer temperatures may reach low 90s° (33°C) and drop to around 50° (10°C) at night.

Elevation: Sea level–800 feet (244 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling

YOUNTVILLE

Climate: Moderate, with marine influence and fog contributing to cool summer mornings; the marine breeze keeps afternoons more comfortable than farther up valley; summer temperatures may reach the low 90s° (33°C), with nighttime temperatures dropping into the mid-50s° (13°C).

Elevation: 20–200 feet (6–61 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot

STAGS LEAP DISTRICT

Climate: Moderately warm with afternoon marine winds cooling the warmer air radiating off the bare rocks of the surrounding hillsides; summer temperatures can reach 100°, but more regularly are in mid-90s° (34–36°C).

Elevation: Sea level–400 feet (122 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot

ATLAS PEAK

Climate: Cool, mountain influenced with temperatures about 10–15° cooler than the valley floor in summer; above the fog line, there is low day-to-night temperature range, with summer temperatures rarely rising above 90° (32°C).

Elevation: 760–2600 feet (232–792 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay

RUTHERFORD

Climate: Moderately warm, marginally influenced by early morning fog; usual summer peak temperatures are in the mid-90° range (34–36°C), averaging a bit warmer and higher base elevation than Oakville and Stags Leap District.

Elevation: 155–500 feet (47–152 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Franc

ST. HELENA

Climate: Warm, due to greater protection from western hills, with less fog and wind; the narrowing of the valley floor provides more heat reflection off the hillsides; summer temperatures often peak in the mid-to-high 90s° range (34–37°C).

Elevation: 200–475 feet (61–145 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Zinfandel and Viognier

SPRING MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

Climate: Cool to moderate depending on elevation and aspect. Most vineyards sit above the fog-line, providing warmer nights and cooler days than the valley floor. Typical mid-summer high temperatures reach 85° (29°C).

Elevation: 600–2600 feet (183–792 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay and Zinfandel

CHILES VALLEY

Climate: Summer temperatures peak in the mid-80s° (29°C), but due to higher elevation and evening fog, drop to below 50° (10°C).

Elevation: 600–1200 feet (182–366 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Zinfandel

HOWELL MOUNTAIN

Climate: Located above the fog line on the eastern side of the valley, the AVA is warmer and drier than other AVAs with more hours of sunshine and little-to-no marine influence.

Elevation: 1400–2600 feet (427–792 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Zinfandel and Viognier

DIAMOND MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

Climate: Moderately warm temperatures with less fluctuation than the north Napa Valley floor; temperatures in the summer range from 50–90° (10–32°C).

Elevation: 400–2200 feet (122–671 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc

CALISTOGA

Climate: Daytime summer temperatures may peak above 100° (38°C) and fall to low 40s° (6°C) at night, due to cool afternoon and evening breezes drawn in through the Chalk Hill Gap from the Pacific Ocean.

Elevation: 300–1200 feet (91–366 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah

CRYSTAL SPRINGS OF NAPA VALLEY

Climate: Hillside topography with slopes facing west-to-southwest, allowing for high solar radiation, which helps grapes mature each growing season. With elevations ranging from 400 to 1400 feet, this AVA is placed above the floor of the Napa Valley, which is more susceptible to early autumn frosts.

Elevation: 400 - 1400 feet (122 to 427 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Franc

OAKVILLE

Climate: Moderately warm, with temperatures commonly in the mid-90s (35°C) in summer, but affected by night and early morning fog creating a day-to-night temperature fluctuation. The east side hills receive warm afternoon sun while the west side cools as the sun sets behind the Mayacamas range.

Elevation: 130–1000 feet (40–305 m)

Principal varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc