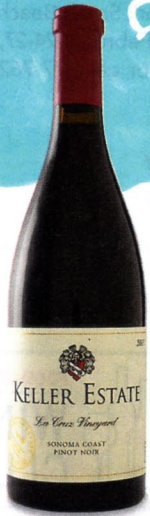
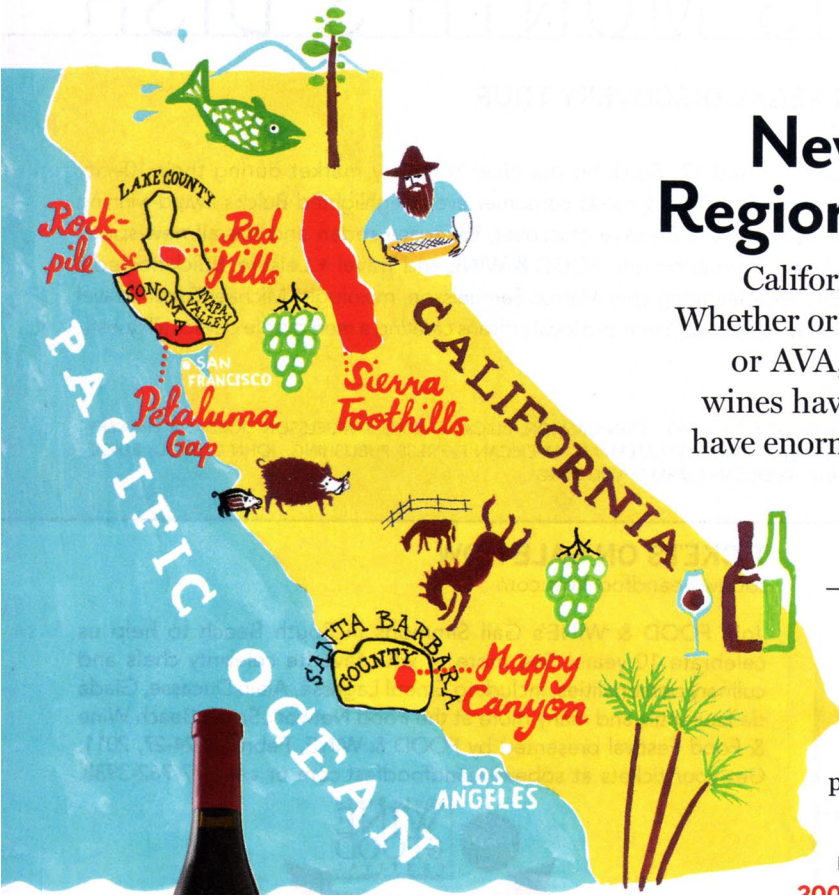


WINE-TASTING ROOM

New California Wine Regions You Need to Know

California is a vast patchwork of wine zones. Whether or not they have American Viticultural Area, or AVA, status (denoting a region where the wines have distinctive character), many new spots have enormous potential. Here, the names to know.

BY RAY ISLE



PACIFIC COAST PINOT NOIR

Keller Estate's vineyards are in the Petaluma Gap region, where cool ocean fogs roll in off the Bodega and Tomales bays.

PETALUMA GAP

Sonoma's Petaluma Gap lies in what is effectively a wind tunnel between the Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Bay. It isn't yet an official AVA, but many people think it deserves to be on the strength of its cool-climate Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays and Syrahs.

BOTTLES TO TRY
2007 Keller Estate La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$44)

When Keller Estate opened in the Petaluma Gap in 2000, it was the first winery in the region (there had been vineyards there for quite some time). Its 86 acres of grapes include top-quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, which go into bottlings like this crisp, raspberry-inflected red.

2008 Cline Cool Climate Syrah (\$16) The area's chilly winds push this Syrah toward a taut, peppery style. Aging in a small percentage of new French oak barrels adds complexity.

2008 Gallo Family Vineyards Two Rock Chardonnay (\$28) This single-vineyard bottling is a perfect example of the region's potential for creating sleek, nuanced Chardonnays.

RED HILLS LAKE COUNTY

The Red Hills Lake County AVA, north of Napa Valley, got a recent boost when star Bordeaux winemaker Stéphane Derenoncourt chose to make one of his first California wines with Red Hills grapes. But local growers have long known how well Cabernet grows in the rocky, volcanic soil here.

BOTTLES TO TRY

2008 Shannon Ridge Ranch Collection Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19)

Red Hills grapes were blended with others from High Valley (another Lake County region) for this full-flavored red.

2005 Snows Lake One Cabernet (\$45) Snows Lake's high elevation keeps temperatures cool, making for balanced Cabernets like this one.

2008 Steele Cabernet Sauvignon Red Hills Lake County (\$29) Jed Steele, a pioneer in Lake County, draws from one of the region's top vineyards, Amber Knolls, for this focused Cabernet.

2007 Obsidian Ridge Half Mile (\$60) The unusual spice notes of Hungarian oak and a bright floral lift from a high percentage of Petit Verdot make this Cabernet blend extremely compelling.

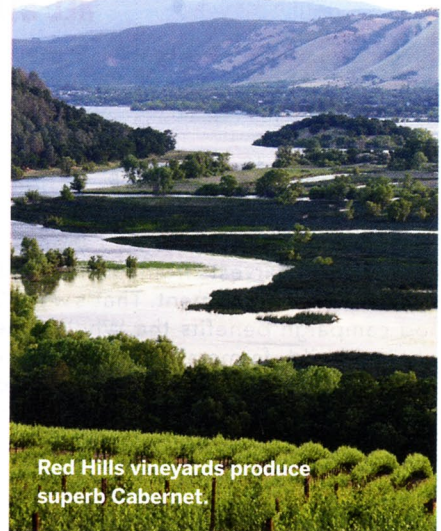


ILLUSTRATION: ANNIKA HUETT; PHOTOGRAPHS: THEO MORRISON (BOTTLE), THE LAKE COUNTY WINE COMMISSION (VINEYARD)