

Goldeneeye

ANDERSON VALLEY

Anderson Valley History

Anderson Valley, located in Mendocino County approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco, is blessed with an exceptional and unique viticultural climate. The combination of warm, sunny days and cool, foggy nights allows the grapes from this region to develop to the height of their varietal character. While Anderson Valley is ideally suited for cool season varietals, the existence of a series of unique meso-climates surrounding the valley allows for a diversity of conditions for grape growing.

Beginning in the mid 1800s and continuing to the present day, Anderson Valley's wine industry has enjoyed a quiet, gradual evolution. Originating with the small plantings of European immigrants, it has today become an appellation of its own, producing wines of distinctive character.

Viticulture and winemaking in Anderson Valley began with the Swiss and Italian settlers who planted vineyards with cuttings from their homelands. Although the fruit from these vineyards was mostly for home consumption, the fermented products found their way to the logging camps in the Valley and along the coast and a fledgling wine industry emerged. In the 1890s, Italian immigrants settled the Greenwood Ridge area, developing small vineyards and wineries on their homesteads. Accessible by a logging railroad, woodsmen and millworkers would ride the train up the ridge and spend the weekend buying and drinking wine from the ridge-top wineries.

With the onset of Prohibition, wineries were raided and equipment destroyed by federal agents. Many of the small vineyards fell into decline and were never revived when Prohibition was repealed. In the 1940s, Anderson Valley became the focus of an unsuccessful attempt by Italian Swiss Colony to produce table wines. French Colombard and Ugni Blanc were among the varietals planted, but being suited to warmer climates, these grapes did not ripen sufficiently to produce quality wines. The project was abandoned in the 1950s.



In the mid-1960s, despite advice to the contrary, Dr. Donald Edmeades planted 24 acres of varietal grapes. Other growers followed suit, finding that with the right cool season varietals and viticultural practices, premium wine could be produced. In 1983, Anderson Valley became officially recognized as an appellation of its own. The planted acreage in Anderson Valley consists primarily of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer. There are also small plantings of other varietals such as Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, White Riesling, Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Merlot. The future holds great promise for Anderson Valley and the excellent still wines produced there, as well as for outstanding sparkling wines made in the méthode champenoise.

Source: Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association