

NEW YORK

Eat Grilled Cheese With Greek Wines in Sonoma

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The area's hip wineries and hotels, paired with gorgeous Sequoias and that craggy coast, make it a top destination for cool young wine geeks and outdoors freaks alike.



Sonoma has plenty of what you'd expect—e.g., these beautiful vineyards—but also plenty of other treats, like wine bars with glasses from Greece and horseback-led national-park tours.

(Photo: Photograph by Adam Hester/Getty Images)

Where to Stay

Request a peaceful creek-view room at the ecofriendly H2, a buzzy Healdsburg spot with only 36 rooms (rates starting at \$309), all of which have private balconies or patios. The LEED-certified dwelling also has pretty gardens and a pool. Inside, rooms follow an orderly white palette with bamboo floors and bathrooms with custom-made bath products. Sprinkled about the property are “water bars” to procure still or sparkling aqua. For a banner massage, grab a loaner bike and pedal to the hotel's nearby sibling, Hotel Healdsburg.



The Hirsch Room at the newly renovated hotel Timber Cove.

(Photo: Courtesy of Timber Cove)

Set along 25 acres of rugged Pacific coastline, the newly renovated, Frank Lloyd Wright–esque 46-room Timber Cove maintains its '70s A-frame essence with design savvy. Minimalist accommodations (doubles from \$250) come with private decks lending way for stellar star- and ocean-gazing. Speaking of:

The aptly titled Coast Kitchen has seafood covered. Think salt-roasted PEI mussels (\$12) and seared dayboat scallops (\$26) paired with a crisp glass of SCV Sauvignon Blanc (\$13). Later, sign up for a guided hike, foraging sojourn, or gentle kayak ride, and return to the blaze of bonfires and endless wine flow.

Book one of the elegant rooms at Madrona Manor (from \$285), set in an 1880s three-story Victorian mansion. Nestled on eight acres, the rooms feature plush details like handsome carved-wood writing desks and antique four-poster beds; some suites boast fireplaces and private decks, and there's a swimming pool on-site. Nab an outdoor table at Madrona's Michelin-starred restaurant to watch the sun set over the Healdsburg hillside, preferably while drinking a garden-inspired cocktail. In the kitchen, Michelin-starred chef Jesse Wiley Malaren cooks with local produce, much of which is sourced from the onsite gardens — try the vegetarian tasting menu. (Save room for dessert: The vanilla ice cream is hand-churned tableside.)

Where to Eat



At Valette in Healdsburg, try the “Trust Me” tasting menu.

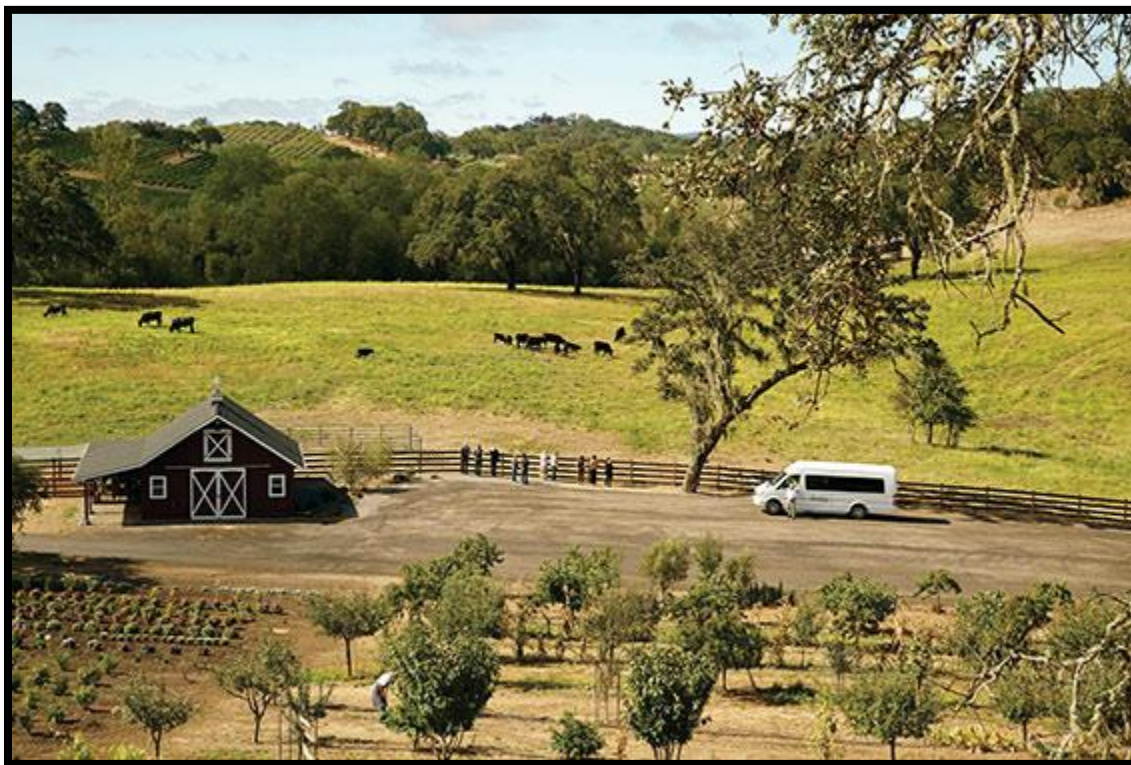
(Photo: Courtesy of Valette)

Opened by two brothers in Healdsburg, the local favorite Valette is located on the site where their great-grandfather once had a bakery. Opt for chef Dustin Valette’s arty, seasonally changing “Trust Me” tasting menu, or order from a rotating selection known to include Hawaiian ahi poke (\$15) and char-grilled prime steak with mushrooms (\$37). Naturally, save room for the Its Not a “Snickers Bar,” with a cocoa-nib tuile, peanut powder, and locally produced Volo dark chocolate.

In Sebastopol, drop by the buzzy, industrial-hip Ramen Gaijin for small Japanese plates and heaping bowls of ramen. Begin with a G&T using Junipéro gin and Fever Tree tonic (\$9) or a boozy yuki omma punch (\$12) with Pisco, elderflower, and mint. Then order the Little Gem lettuces (\$12) and the pickle plate (\$8) and graduate to the spicy tan tan ramen. The vegetarian set can slurp on the shiitake-miso ramen with Sapporo noodles and a six-minute egg (both \$16).

Bergamot Alley is a wine bar that’s open late (till 1 a.m. most nights). The co-owner of the Shed, Cindy Daniel, is a fan — she says it caters to locals and wine-industry folks. Check the website’s events schedule to find a concert or trivia night you’d like to attend, then come by early for a dinner of grilled cheese sandwiches. The place is heaven for wine geeks (e.g., Bergamot Alley has a grower-Champagne club — every month, members get a new bottle of those trendy bubbles), and you’ll be offered a wine list that travels the world, from Greece to the Loire Valley to Slovenia to Normandy.

What to Do



Jordan Winery offers three-hour tours — you might see hawks, deer, and farm animals.

(Photo: Courtesy of Jordan Winery)

This is Sonoma, so drinking wine is requisite. Pretend you're in Bordeaux at Jordan Winery's peaceful three-hour estate tour (\$120) along rolling vineyards and scenic lakes — spot deer and hawks, oak trees, and an organic farm. The two wines (Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Russian River Valley Chardonnay) pair well with gourmet snacks and the property's own extra-virgin olive oil. A few miles away, don't forget to drop by the Coppola Winery (preferably in a cabana) for the latest in wine and movie memorabilia, preferably in a pool cabana with new copies of *Zoetrope*.

Or go on a smaller “hipster” winery tour: Sip away at the pastoral winery Scribe (reservations required) or head over to the biodynamic Preston Winery, which channels that relaxed-backyard-picnic-table feel with a bocce-ball yard and lovely farm animals. On Sundays, slip into a simple peasant-style affair of local cheese, fresh bread, and a hearty three-liter jug of Preston's Guadagni red (straight from the tap). Or try out Three Sticks Winery, which offers tastings in elegant stemware from veteran winemaker Bob Cabral in a richly renovated adobe. Meanwhile, the niche Da Vero produces Mediterranean and Italian varietals as sheep graze outside, making this a pastoral milieu for sipping. Linger at Stone Edge Farm to enjoy the ideal mountain location with sweeping views, tasting either the signature Cabernet Sauvignon or the Bordeaux blend, “Surround.” Need a driver? Do yourself a favor and put Healdsburg Vino Tours on speed dial.

For a break from wine, retreat into nature with a picnic. In the morning, head to Healdsburg's rustic-quiet Jimtown Store. Linger at the patio with coffee and housemade granola for breakfast before picking up boxed provisions like a “Chunky Chicken Salad” sandwich and a tempeh bánh mì (call 24 hours in advance to order). Then take your lunch to the many picnic spots surrounded by towering Sequoias and wildflowers in the majestic wonder of Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve. You might spot

experienced horseback riders on the trails — if that gets you itching for touring at a faster pace, dial Triple Creek Horse Outfit in Glen Ellen. The staff and their horses can guide you on a ride through nearby Jack London State Historic Park, a 1,400-acre, redwood-filled park named for the writer who once lived there.

Expert's Tips



Walk the Kortum Trail for excellent coastline views.

(Photo: Jerry Dodrill/Getty Images)

From Cindy Daniel, co-owner of Shed, who has lived in Sonoma on her family farm in Dry Creek Valley for over 20 years.

For explorations, the Kortum Trail, located near Bodega Bay, is a beautiful four-mile hike overlooking the Sonoma coastline. The well-maintained trail, much of which is a double plankwood walkway lined with native plants and wildflowers, goes over wetland and ends at Shell Beach.

Gallery Lulo is a curated space featuring compelling work from the worlds of art and jewelry.

Located under one roof in downtown Petaluma are two kindred stores: At the front, Maude carries charming handmade children's clothing, along with stylish women's clothing and small accessories. Further back, you'll find Good Gray, a small mercantile that stocks housewares, art supplies, and other irresistible treats.

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