

Weekend Away **NAPA/SONOMA**



No matter when you visit the vineyards of Napa and Sonoma valleys, each season brings its own charms and reveals a landscape tied to the vine's life cycle. One of the busiest times of the year

is harvest — from late August to mid-October — when vintners hurriedly test each field to determine when to bring in the year's bounty. Here's a look at what each season brings to the vine:

### GOING BEYOND THE WINERIES

With more than 300 wineries in the region, there is more than enough to keep you busy. But there's more to do if you are looking to get away from a tasting room:

- 1 CALISTOGA GEYSER**  
Health retreat since the 1870s, this old town has museums, spas, shopping and a regularly erupting geyser that shoots 70 feet into the air every 30 minutes.
- 2 CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA**  
Campus includes theater, store, cooking demos, cafe and high-end restaurant.
- 3 JACK LONDON HISTORICAL PARK**  
Rustic and serene, 1,400-acre park includes ranch house where London wrote, museum and more than 10 miles of trails. [jacklondonpark.com](http://jacklondonpark.com)
- 4 MISSION SAN FRANCISCO SOLANO DE SONOMA**  
Part of Sonoma State Historical Park. Built in 1823. Historical exhibits and lovely courtyard garden. Restored in 1911 along with portion of Sonoma's central plaza.
- 5 INFINEON RACEWAY**  
Annual races include Grand Prix of Sonoma; various kart, motorcycle and drag-racing events. [infineonraceway.com](http://infineonraceway.com)
- 6 BONAVENTURA BALLOON RIDES**  
Hot-air balloon trip explores Napa Valley from above. Trip lasts three to four hours.
- 7 NAPA PREMIUM OUTLETS**  
Shopping center boasts dozens of designer stores including BCBG, Max Azria, Kenneth Cole and Nine West. [premiumoutlets.com](http://premiumoutlets.com)
- 8 WINE TRAIN**  
Daily gourmet dinner excursions aboard 1915 Pullman rail car with full cocktail and wine service as you chug past vineyards. [winetrain.com](http://winetrain.com)
- 9 NAPA VALLEY MUSEUM**  
More than history of wines, museum features art works, exhibits on local flora, fauna. [napavalleymuseum.com](http://napavalleymuseum.com)
- 10 FRENCH LAUNDRY RESTAURANT**  
Two-month wait for a table at this famously lavish restaurant. Renowned fixed, nine-course dinner for \$210. [frenchlaundry.com](http://frenchlaundry.com)

### TRACKING THE SEASONS ON THE VINE

#### AUTUMN

**VINEYARDS:** You'll see the most action at Sonoma and Napa wineries during the late summer and early fall, when pressure builds on winemakers with the harvest looming. Growers sample grapes for ripeness — acid levels have dropped, allowing sugar content to rise.

- **HARVEST:** Late August to October, weather depending.
- **FALL COLOR:** Leaves turn red, orange, yellow and fall off by late October.
- **PROCESSING:** Grapes dumped into huge vats, destemmed, crushed, then moved to fermentation tanks.

**WEATHER**

- Days average 65-82 degrees; nights, 43-53 degrees.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **CALISTOGA BLUES FESTIVAL:** October, various concerts, food, wine and beer booths.
- **NAPA HARVEST FESTIVAL:** September, Charles Krug Winery, St. Helena (food, wine, art).

#### SUMMER

**VINEYARDS:** Summer is the growing season, when careful management of vines yields bountiful harvests. Visitors will see lush, green fields under a warm sun.

- **GRAPES FORM:** Late June, pollinated vines bloom, start to produce grapes.
- **ENCOURAGE GROWTH:** Excess fruit cut; vine produces fewer but better grapes.
- **COLOR CHANGE:** Early August, grape ripening process begins, leading to "veraison" — when berries turn color, sugar levels rise.

**WEATHER**

- From low 50s to mid 80s; great ripening weather. Too much heat slows grape growth.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **MUSIC IN THE VINEYARDS:** Three weeks in August. Ten Mozart works at various venues.
- **INDY GRAND PRIX:** Mid-July at Infineon Raceway, south of Sonoma

### SICKLY VINES

Dead and diseased leaves tested for dozens of insect and fungi infestations. Problems need to be caught early to prevent reduction in yield — even a 10 percent loss can prevent profitability. Healthy vines also tested to determine if soil and water conditions need adjustment.



### SPRING

**VINEYARDS:** By March, depending on conditions, sap runs through vines as soil warms. Visitors see first nodes swell on bare canes. Small buds break, fuzzy leaves shoot up.

- **APRIL SHOWERS:** Vigorous shoots carry leaf buds up.
- **MAY FLOWERS:** Warmer weather, flowers appear.

**WEATHER**

- Too much rain and wind deter vine growth. Nights average 42 degrees; days are breezy, 78 degrees.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **APRIL FESTIVALS:** Vineyard to Vintner event; Spring Release and Case Party; Sunrise Stables Music Derby.

### WINTER

**VINEYARDS:** Gray and stark. When vineyards are bare in late November, growers prune and prepare vines for next season.

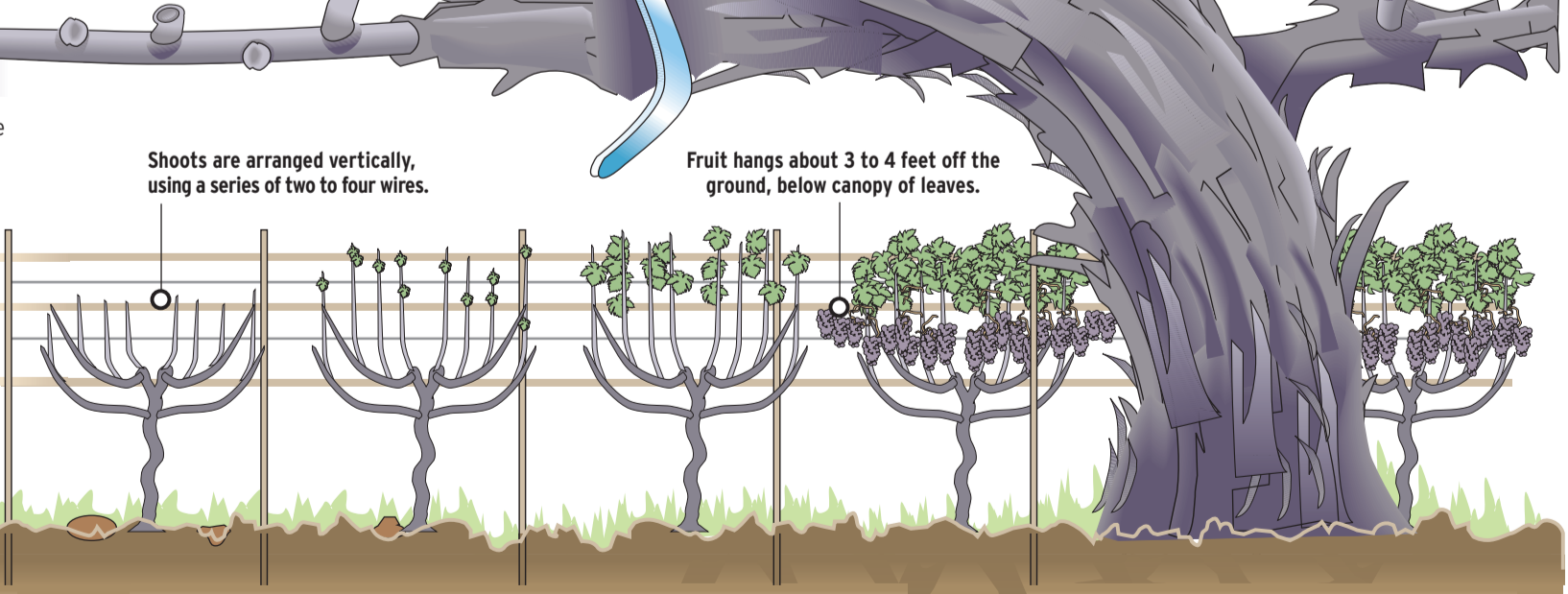
- **FEEDING:** Pressed grape skins used as fertilizer.
- **PRUNING:** Canes trimmed so vine concentrates efforts in spring on nourishing fruit.

**WEATHER**

- Rains fewer than 10 days each month — not enough to over-saturate vines. Lows, mid-30s; highs, mid-60s.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **WINE TRAIN:** Thanksgiving on the Wine Train includes full meal, wine-tasting seminar while passing through vineyards.
- **JANUARY, SONOMA:** Winter Wineland — visit 100 wineries (many not usually open to public). Get special deals.



<h4>INFORMATION</h4> <p><b>CALENDAR OF EVENTS:</b> <a href="http://www.napavalley.org">www.napavalley.org</a> <a href="http://www.sonoma.com">www.sonoma.com</a></p> <p><b>WINERY AND INDUSTRY INFO:</b> <a href="http://www.napavintners.com">www.napavintners.com</a> <a href="http://www.sonomavalleywine.com">www.sonomavalleywine.com</a></p>	<h4>TRELLIS CONSIDERATIONS</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DESIGN:</b> Trellis design creates microclimate for each vine, affecting character of wine. Design selection based on soil type and grape variety.</li> <li>● <b>VERTICAL SHOOT POSITION:</b> Most popular design; trains canes upward along posts and wires; increases sun exposure, air circulation; reduces mildew.</li> <li>● <b>SUNLIGHT:</b> Reducing canopy maximizes sunlight on fruit, improving ripeness, color, flavor.</li> </ul>	<h4>NAPA VALLEY SOIL</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>SOIL:</b> Thirty-three types, ranging from volcanic red to sandy gray.</li> <li>● <b>UPPER VALLEY:</b> Well-drained, holds little water; makes more tannic, ripe, firm grapes.</li> <li>● <b>LOWER VALLEY:</b> Hardpan clay limits vine roots. Stress forces vine to produce small berries, giving wines more flavor.</li> </ul>
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