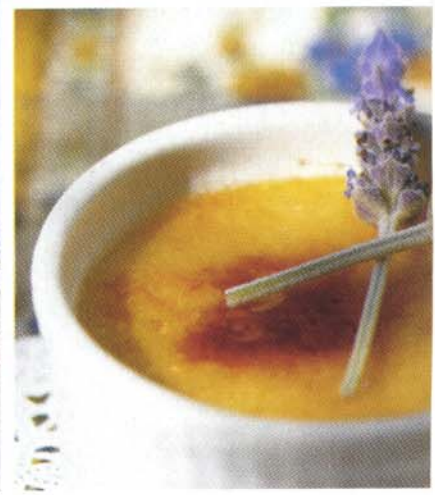
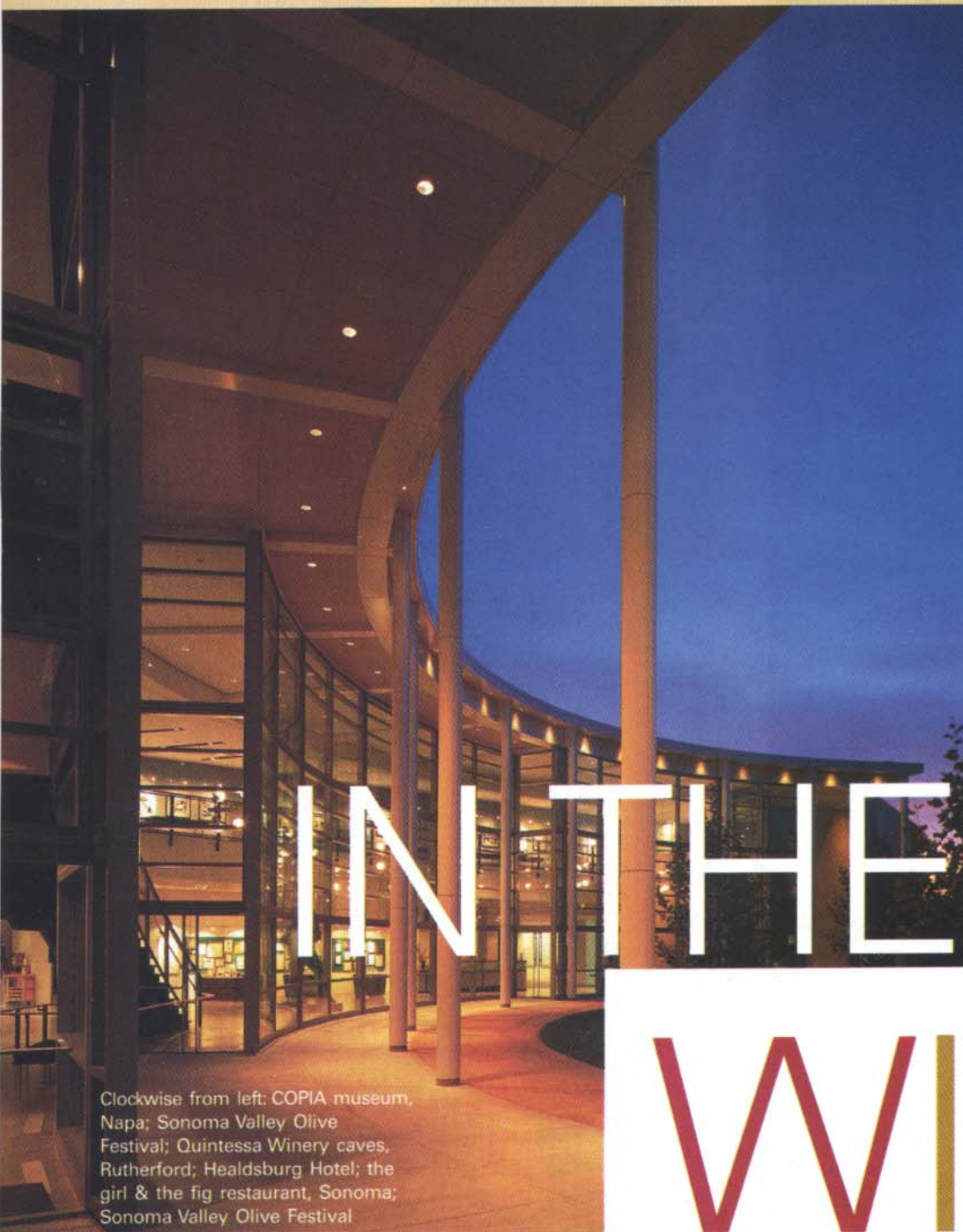


Holiday

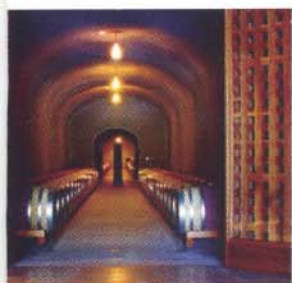


IN THE

WINE

Clockwise from left: COPIA museum, Napa; Sonoma Valley Olive Festival; Quintessa Winery caves, Rutherford; Healdsburg Hotel; the girl & the fig restaurant, Sonoma; Sonoma Valley Olive Festival

This holiday season, why not escape the hectic city for the leisure and luxuries of Napa and Sonoma Counties. Fine dining, fabulous shopping, and a wealth of exciting activities await you here in the Bay Area's most desirable getaway destination.



NAPA

With the hustle of the harvest over, the holidays are an ideal time for an unhurried tour of California's most famous wineries. Rent a bicycle from St. Helena Cyclery and make stops to visit the tasting rooms at your own pace, or hire a limousine and driver from Beau Wine Tours for a more upscale expedition. Destinations you won't want to miss include Artesa Vineyards & Winery, an architectural marvel built completely underground; Stags' Leap, which includes a portrait studio on the winery grounds and a rotating artist-in-residence; and the tasting rooms of storied Caymus Vineyards and Joseph Phelps, each open only by appointment. Stop by some of the smaller and lesser-known wineries along the way—half the fun lies in exploration and discovery! For an extra holiday treat, catch the "Carols in the Caves" concert on December 11 and 12 in the tunnels underneath Quintessa Winery, where The Improvisator performs both familiar classics and obscure selections, playing up to 50 rare and exotic folkloric instruments.

Culinary aficionados must visit COPIA, a cultural museum and educational center in Napa dedicated to the American traditions of food and wine. Stop in for holiday fare at Julia's Kitchen, COPIA's in-house restaurant named for famed chef Julia Child; or stroll the exquisitely landscaped grounds (including numerous edible gardens). And don't miss the farmers market held in the parking lot every Tuesday.

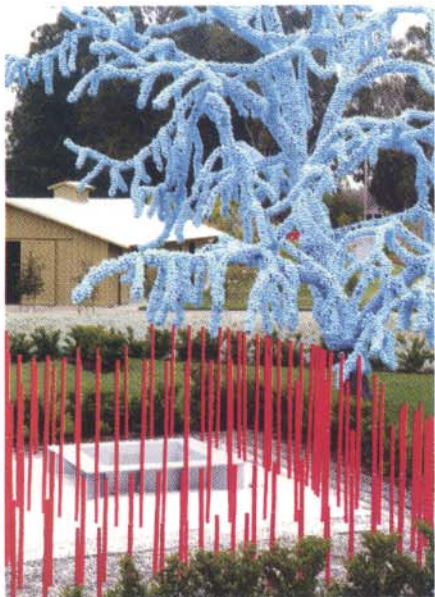
In downtown Napa, the recently opened Pilar is drawing rave reviews for its streamlined, seasonal menu and a wine list that pairs local favorites with "soul mates" from around the world. Up-valley in St. Helena, check out Cindy's Backstreet Kitchen, the latest offering from celebrity restaurateur Cindy Pawlcyn, where comfort food is inspired by Northern California's farms, orchards, and ocean.

Dedicated holiday shoppers will find all their wishes answered at the Napa Premium Outlet Mall, where discounted retailers include Barney's of New York, Dana Buchman, TSE, Izod, Kenneth Cole, Cole-Hahn, DKNY, BCBG, and Timberland. A smaller Premium Mall just north of St. Helena offers Coach, Escada, Brooks Brothers, and Tumi.

The holiday season brings a full revue of entertainment options, too. Leading off on the day after Thanksgiving, the Yountville Festival of Lights is an all-day event with food, wine, shopping, tree-lighting, and a visit from Santa Claus. November 27 marks the Napa Christmas Parade, an evening celebration (starting at 4:30 p.m.) for the entire family, now in its 42nd year. For history buffs, nine historic Napa homes will open their doors for a Holiday Candlelight Tour on the evening of December 11. *She Loves Me*, a romantic musical created by the team behind *Fiddler on the Roof*, plays from December 3 to 19 at the newly restored Napa Valley Opera House.

Ready for a relaxing break from all this fun? Head for Calistoga, whose natural hot springs have

COUNTRY



Cornerstone Festival of Gardens, Sonoma; Artesa Vineyards & Winery, Napa

created a spa oasis. And what better place to seek rejuvenation than Oasis Spa? This intimate retreat offers individual or couple treatments, ranging from a volcanic ash and peat moss mud bath to a Swedish-Esalen massage to a natural hot springs mineral bath.

All this activity is enough to induce a long winter's nap. Try the stylish accommodations at 1801 First, a newly renovated luxury inn in downtown Napa with a fireplace in every room. The full-service resort at Meadowood, near St. Helena, offers remodeled lodges, suites, and cottages nestled in the forested hillside of the

valley. For those wishing even more privacy, the Silver Rose Inn and Spa offers 20 rooms set on a lush 20-acre estate surrounded by mountains, (their own) working vineyards, a charming creek, and a marvelous rose garden.

SONOMA

Less frequented than its famous neighbor to the east, Sonoma County offers a slower pace that evokes California's agrarian past. Sense the history at Sonoma's Gundlach Bundschu Winery, one

Art - Wine - Vineyards

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Clockwise from left: "Carols in the Cave" at Quintessa Winery, Rutherford; Healdsburg Hotel exterior and massage room; wine tasting at Ledson Hotel, Sonoma

of the oldest vineyards in California, where the first grapes were planted in 1858. Don't miss the winery's open house on December 4 or Gun Bun's huge wine caves. Up the road in San Rosa, the Matanzas Creek Winery features extensive and beautiful gardens, including a lavender field that yields wonderful aromatic gifts, perfect for stocking stuffers. Further north in Healdsburg, the Hanna Winery has won the sweepstakes at the annual Sonoma County Harvest Fair for a record third time in five years; meet the award-winning winemakers at their annual Holiday Dinner on December 4 (\$75 per person, reservations required).

Indeed, the holiday season is a fine time to feast. Try the country fare of the girl & the fig, a charming restaurant on Sonoma Square with a rustic, French-inspired menu and an eclectic wine list composed only of Rhône varietals; this is also the venue for a holiday winemaker dinner with Arrowood Winery, co-sponsored by Ramekins Culinary School, on December 7. Brand new in Santa Rosa, the restaurant formerly called Popina has reopened as 707, featuring a diverse menu of small plates at "neighborhood prices"—the perfect choice after a budget-busting day of holiday shopping. For something more romantic, the

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"global Italian" cuisine of Cena Luna in Healdsburg exudes a relaxed spirit that eludes its big-city counterparts.

Winter festivals kick into gear after Thanksgiving, starting November 26 to 27 with Holiday Open Houses along Sonoma Valley's Hwy. 12, where participating wineries showcase special food and wine pairings; they open again on the evenings of December 4 and 5 for the annual Festival of Lights, one of the wine country's largest servings of holiday cheer. For a more intimate event, try the Catalan Holiday Luncheon at Gloria Ferrer Champagne Caves on December 11 (reservations required), with a sparkling wine reception, private winery tour, and sumptuous lunch menu by Wild Thyme. Do-it-yourselfers should consider the Holiday Cocktail Party Cooking Class at Relish Culinary School, demonstrating seasonal appetizers and cocktails at the Hotel Healdsburg. And this month kicks off the three-month Sonoma Valley Olive Festival with a gala dinner on December 4 at Ramekins in Sonoma, featuring delicious dishes prepared by local chefs.

From bed-and-breakfasts to luxury resorts, Sonoma County offers a wide range of accommodations—including some new and noteworthy properties. Recently opened on Sonoma Square, the Ledson Hotel features six individually decorated rooms and the Harmony Club, a jazz club, wine bar, and restaurant on the ground floor. The new Les Mars Hôtel in Healdsburg, slated to open in December, offers the gracious ambience of an 18th-century European chateau, located a mere block from the town plaza. Another little-known Healdsburg treasure is the Grape Leaf Inn, a Queen

WINE COUNTRY RESOURCES

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Sonoma County Tourism Program

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(800) 576-6662
www.sonomacounty.com

Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau

453 First St. East, Sonoma
(707) 996-1033
www.sonomavalley.com

Anne Victorian boutique hotel with a "speakeasy" tasting room down a staircase hidden behind a bookshelf; every afternoon at cocktail hour, proprietor Richard Rosenberg pours glasses of hard-to-find vintages, many from local wineries without tasting rooms.

Your holiday escape to California wine country awaits. With fewer tourists, cooler weather, and vibrant winter landscapes—not to mention outstanding wine tasting, shopping, dining, relaxing, and other activities—now is the time to enjoy the ease and elegance of this fabulous region.