

# NAPA & SONOMA

## ENCOUNTER

ALISON BING

Napa & Sonoma Encounter

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### Color-Coding & Maps

Color-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating and drinking venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each Wine Country valley also gets its own color, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that regional section.

### Review Listings

Winery reviews are listed geographically in each valley chapter from south to north. All other reviews are listed alphabetically.

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## ALISON ING

When not scribbling notes on menus and grazing her way across NorCal valleys, Alison is writing for Lonely Planet's *San Francisco, California* and *Italy* guides, and gourmet and art magazines including *Cooking Light* and *Flash Art*. She divides her time between San Francisco and a hilltop town in Tuscany, which looks a lot like Napa, only older and less likely to wear flip-flops. Alison holds a bachelor's degree in art history and a masters degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, a joint program of Tufts and Harvard Universities – perfectly respectable credentials she regularly undermines with opinionated culture commentary for magazines, news outlets and radio.



## ALISON'S THANKS

Alison offers thanks in Wine Country quantities: magnums to fellow members of Slow Food SF, Cook Here & Now and Sanchez Writers Annex; special reserve Jeroboams to cartographer Alison Lyall, project manager Fabrice Rocher and editor Saralinda Turner, and Encounter champions Heather Dickson and Brice Gosnell; sparkling Methuselahs to honored designated drivers Yosh Han, Sahai Burrowes, Luke Hass, Kristin Sgroi, Alexei Wachman, Natasha Nicholson and Erin Archuleta; and a Balthazar to Suki Gear, every writer's dream editor. Finally, a Nebuchadnezzar should do the trick for the Bing family and Marco Flavio Marinucci, whom I can't toast enough.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Jerry Alexander is a highly credited food and travel photographer who was born and raised in the Napa Valley. When he's not traveling the world Jerry and his wife, Thanaphon, divide their time between their Wine Country vineyard and their recently completed home in Chiang Mai.

**Cover photograph** A Napa Valley vineyard flaunts its cloak of mist and sunlight, Charles O'Rear/Corbis **Internal photographs** p48 courtesy di Rosa Preserve; p53 Deborah Jones; p103 John McLunkin, courtesy of Freestone Vineyards; p17 *Running through the woods* by Robert Hudson (foreground) and *Camp of Landscape Artists* by Roy De Forest (wall); p77 *Blue Tree 2*, Sonoma 2004 by Claude Cormier, Architectes Paysagistes Inc; p105 Ceramic mural tile wall of Lucy and Charlie Brown in the Charles M Schulz Museum's Great Hall; p176 *Rock Pools, Melted Stone*, 2000 (floor) and drawings from the Earth and Snow Series, 1993, pigment extracted from seeds, pigmented snow allowed to melt on paper by Andy Goldsworthy (side walls), and untitled oil painting, 1983 by Per Kirkeby (back wall). All photographs by Lonely Planet Images and by Jerry Alexander, except p10, p27 Wes Walker; p43, p51 John Elk III; p157 Lee Foster.

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Enchant your taste buds with toasty bubbles from Schramsberg (p46)

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# THIS IS WINE COUNTRY

Other wine regions around the world work just as hard, but this one has all the fun. Consider permission granted to roll in the mud, drink inside a Zoroastrian temple, walk through 1000-year-old redwoods and feast on nine-course organic meals, just because you can.

Anything goes and everything grows in these six valleys, and that's the way it's been for 150 years. Prospectors came for gold and stayed for grapes, bringing boot-stomping good times to rural stagecoach outposts. The varied coastal valley microclimates made everyone feel at home, whether they came from Italy or Patagonia, Australia or Alsace – not that it was always easy to put down roots in NorCal, with its turbulent geologic history of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Only the most adventurous immigrants and idealistic hippies stood their ground here, creating an experimental green polyglot farming ecosystem that has come to define California on the plate, inside the glass and in the popular imagination.

Pity the folks back home enduring glum happy hours with house reds and brie wedges: you'll be discovering authentic Thai spring rolls made with Sonoma-grown lemongrass and Anderson Valley Dry Gewürztraminer, or taco-truck carne asada off Hwy 101 to pair with your Alexander Valley Cab. These are the Wine Country moments that make foodies and wine aficionados wax rhapsodic and taciturn surfers utter the ultimate NorCal benediction: 'Right on.'

Yet for all its cultivated fields and finely tuned palates, the West still has its wild side. Old-growth sequoias stand tall in Russian River and Anderson Valleys thanks to conservation initiatives pioneered by rebel lumber barons, and wild trout are making comebacks with sustainable farming practices. When the yellow mustard blooms and wildflowers take over the hills, you'll be glad you came for the wine and stayed for the countryside.

**Top** Detour to Lake Sonoma for hiking, boating and the annual steelhead-trout spawning frenzy (p133) **Bottom** Discovering the intricacies of oak and age at Robert Young winery (p138)