

NAPA SONOMA

LUXURY LIVING IN CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY

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In High Spirits

The local craft-cocktail scene is booming, thanks to these 12 bars. >p. 28

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▼ The sophisticated signature libations at Fern Bar are attracting craft-cocktail fans to Sebastopol.

Cocktail Culture TAKES OFF

Wine Country isn't just about wine anymore. A new wave of local bars and restaurants is ushering in a golden age of spirit-based sippers. BY AMBER TURPIN

// We've all been there. At the end of a day of nonstop wine tasting, you want anything but vino with dinner. It's no wonder that many winemakers say they actually enjoy a nice cold beer when they're off duty. So if you find yourself with palate fatigue this season, consider a visit to one of these stellar establishments that craft elevated cocktails—often using local spirits.

DAWN HEIMANN



Sonoma County

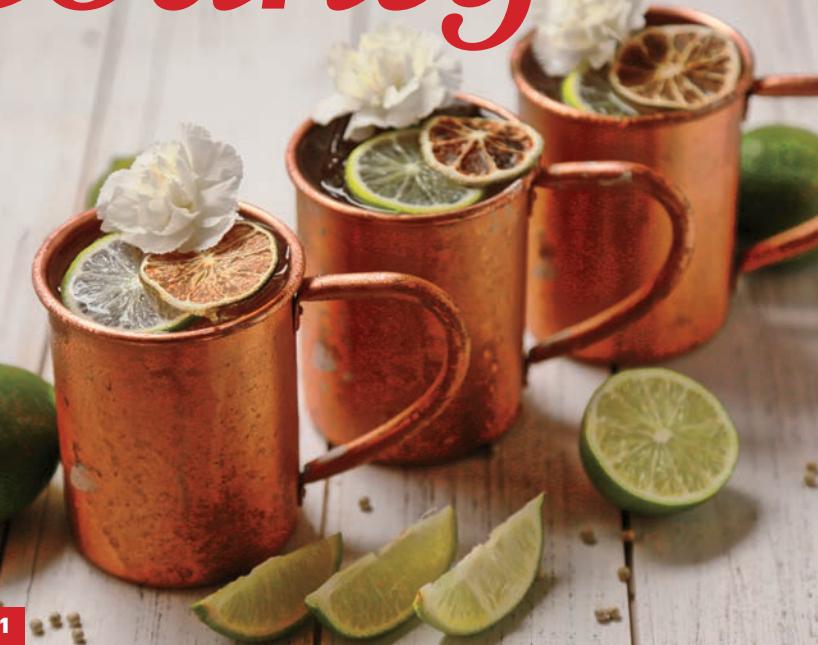
SANTA ROSA // Perch and Plow is a tucked-away second-story gem. When your elevator arrives at this "perch," you step into a sophisticated loft space, filled with artistic and energetic design flourishes. The beverage program is equally vibrant, with a selection of creative craft cocktails that draw inspiration from the region's seasonal bounty. That expression finds its way into the Black Pearl Punch, which mixes Charbay Meyer lemon vodka with spiced pineapple-infused rum, lemon juice, pineapple, bay leaf, and ginger bitters. perchandplow.com.

SEBASTOPOL // The Barlow in Sebastopol was a game changer for the small town. The mixed-use outdoor marketplace revitalized a former apple cannery into a thriving food and drink destination. A recent addition to the Barlow's roster, Fern Bar opened in December 2018 after a group of friends (and restaurant-industry pros) had a vision to deliver a true cocktail bar to Sebastopol. The lush, plant-filled space is classy and enticing, brimming with "garden-to-glass" cocktails and great food. Try the Crème de la Femme, with Uncle Val's botanical gin from Sonoma, violet-flower liqueur, oleo saccharum (aka citrus sugar), lemon, egg white, and a splash of rosé. Swing by between 4 and 5 p.m.—known as Social Hour—to try Fern Bar's traditional, Italian-inspired aperitivo or another light cocktail. fernbar.com.

PETALUMA // During Prohibition, there was a term for women-run speakeasies. Whisper Sisters, the less-than-year-old cocktail lounge that replaced Petaluma's beloved the Drawing Board, pays homage to those strong business ladies of yore. The brother, sister, and fiancée trio that runs the establishment pays strict attention to the seasons, sourcing, and integrity. They also hope the place will serve as a community gathering space—a goal that should be easy to accomplish given the stellar food and drinks they are slinging. You can certainly order a classic cocktail, but you might want to try one of co-owner Danielle Peters's interesting specialty elixirs, such as the Torch Singer, which incorporates Windsor-made Sipsong gin, carrot, white vermouth, citrus, and celery bitters. wspetaluma.com.

SONOMA // The city of Sonoma attracts scores of Wine Country visitors, but Starling Bar Sonoma's name takes a playful dig at the region's top tourist attraction: The starling bird is known to attack vineyards. Inside the local-favorite haunt, you'll find unpretentious, no-nonsense vibes and top-shelf, masterful mixology in equal parts. Co-owner Elizabeth Takeuchi-Krist will shake you up a Sloe Trinidad Sour—made with Redemption rye, orgeat syrup, sloe gin, Angostura bitters, and lemon-lime juice—and then explain why aquafaba (aka chickpea juice) is a great alternative to egg whites. Starling is also a go-to spot for live music and themed weeknight fun, like Vinyl Mondays, Tiki Tuesdays, and Game Night Wednesdays. Tip: Ask to see the secret cannabis-cocktail menu. starlingsonoma.com.

BODEGA BAY // There might be a tendency to associate great libations with urban settings, but way on the county's outskirts, Drake's Fireside Lounge at Bodega Bay Lodge is a tempting rural respite with a robust cocktail list. Its Dark and Stormy, with a base of Sonoma County Siddiqui rum, is a fitting way to enjoy the property's harbor views come rainy season. bodegabaylodge.com.



► 1. Perch and Plow's spin on the Moscow mule changes with the seasons. 2. Danielle Peters prepares a drink at Whisper Sisters. 3. Starling Bar's Sloe Trinidad Sour, Bark Up the Strong Tree, and Laymondrop cocktails. 4. A passion fruit mojito from Drake's Fireside Lounge. 5. A mixologist whips up an elixir at the stylish Fern Bar.

1: COURTESY OF PERCH AND PLOW; 2: WENDELL PETERS; 3: AMBER TURPIN; 4: COURTESY OF BODEGA BAY LODGE, WOODSIDE HOTEL GROUP; 5: KELLY PUJOL

NAT AND CODY GANTZ/COURTESY OF DUKE'S SPIRITED COCKTAILS



HEALDSBURG // The building that houses Duke's Spirited Cocktails has been a bar since 1933. When Duke's opened in 2016, the goal was to continue that legacy of serving a loyal local clientele while also pleasing Wine Country visitors with inventive, artisanal cocktails. The drinks often incorporate house-grown produce and include a larger-than-most selection of on-tap cocktails with witty names. Try the Weekend at Bernie's, prepared with Alley 6 gin (from the eponymous Healdsburg distillery), California-made aloe liqueur, Cointreau, absinthe, and citrus. Bonus: The bartender will give you a taster if you can't decide which tap to try. drinkatdukes.com.

A newer addition to Healdsburg is Harmon Guest House, an eco-chic boutique hotel that is sister to h2hotel and Spoonbar restaurant. The indoor-outdoor lounge on Harmon's upper level, The Rooftop, is the only publicly accessible rooftop bar in town and offers bird's-eye views of shoppers below, the living roof at h2hotel next door, and Fitch Mountain. The sights are equally pleasing at the bar, with colorful concoctions developed by Spoonbar's executive chef, Matthew D'Ambrosi. Many of the spirits come from Wine Country producers, bringing local pride to breezy cocktails like the Sparkling, made with Griffon gin from Petaluma, strawberry liqueur, lemon, cardamom bitters, and Roederer sparkling wine. harmonguesthouse.com/the-rooftop.

ST. HELENA // If you ask wine professionals where they like to gather after work, chances are they will mention Goose and Gander. The attention to detail, meticulous care for craft and ingredients, and edgy basement vibe of this bar make it exemplary. Goose and Gander's Manhattan, in particular, is not to be missed. The mixologists' secret is that they use both Evan Williams bourbon and Templeton rye, bartender McKenzie Silva explains, "to balance it out and make it a little bit different." Adding in Carpano Antica sweet vermouth and three types of bitters, boozy cherries, and a massive hand-carved ice cube pushes this drink to the next level. goosegander.com.



▼ Drink-menu highlights at Goose and Gander include the best-selling Cucumber Collins, the Coastal Pimm's Cup, and a seasonal winter option.

GETTING in the SPIRITS

INVESTIGATE YOUR FAVORITE COCKTAIL'S KEY INGREDIENTS—AND PARTICIPATE IN A GROWING TREND—BY VISITING THESE LOCAL DISTILLERIES.

Alley 6 Craft Distillery

Rye and single-malt whiskeys, gin, and bitters forged from mushrooms. Healdsburg, alley6.com.

Gray Whale Gin

Environmentally conscious, award-winning gins. Sebastopol, graywhalegin.com.

Griffo Distillery

Gin, whiskey, and coffee liqueur. Petaluma, griffo-distillery.com.

Loch and Union Distilling

American dry and barley gins. American Canyon, lochandunion.com.

Siddiqui Rums

Award-winning brown and white rums. Windsor, siddiquirums.com.

Sipsong Spirits

Small-batch botanical gin. Windsor, sipsongspirits.com.

Sonoma Brothers Distilling

Gin, vodka, and whiskey—plus limited-edition fruit brandies. Windsor, sonomabrothersdistilling.com.

Sonoma Distilling Company

Bourbon and rye, crafted straight or wood-smoked. Rohnert Park, sonomadistillingcompany.com.

Spirit Works Distillery

Vodka, gin, sloe gin, and rye and wheat whiskeys. Sebastopol, spiritworksdistillery.com.

Uncle Val's

All-natural, handcrafted gins. Sonoma, unclevalsgin.com.

Young and Yonder Spirits

Artisanal vodkas, gin, bourbon, and even absinthe. Healdsburg, youngandyonder.com.

Napa County



►1. Mercantile Social's Ross and Rachel cocktail, from the bar's TV-themed menu. 2. A trio of Ciccio's inventive twists on the Negroni. 3. The Leather 'n' Rye sipper at Solbar uses leather-infused whiskey.



NAPA // Locals know Mercantile Social—a destination lounge inside Napa's Andaz hotel—as a great place for happy hour, with a lengthy list of seasonal drinks with whimsical themes, and where even the well pours use elevated spirits. The Mercantile Old Fashioned—made with Savage and Cooke bourbon (a custom blend created just for Mercantile), bitters, gomme syrup, and an orange twist—is outstanding. Don't miss the second-floor terrace, a sweet open-air spot to linger day or night. napa.andaz.hyatt.com.

Even though vintner Joe Wagner is the owner of this new hot spot, Avow is more than a place to get a nice glass of wine. The historic building has been beautifully restored, with eclectic, exciting cuisine offered on all three floors, including at the scenic rooftop bar. Ask the bartender to whip up a Naked and Famous—an off-menu stunner containing mezcal, Aperol, yellow Chartreuse, and lime. avownapa.com.

YOUNTVILLE // Another local favorite is Ciccio, a buzzy little Italian restaurant that slings excellent wood-fired pizzas and other seasonally driven specialties. Its petite seven-seat bar features six variations of the Negroni, from a whiskey-based option to a light spritz made with sparkling wine. Frank's Negroni (created by owner Frank Altamura) combines rose petal-infused gin, Campari, Cocchi Torino vermouth, and amaro, and is served with a twist. ciccianapavalley.com.

CALISTOGA // Solbar—the on-site restaurant and lounge at the luxe Solage resort—features an array of entrancing libations. "We take a 'bar chef' approach," mixologist Kelly Dallas explains, "by ... [showcasing] unique ingredients in cocktail form." The fall menu's Lion's Share of Batch No. 1 utilizes buzzed-about Savage and Cooke Lip Service rye, along with peach liqueur, smoked tea, and orange bitters. Folks who abstain from alcohol can try one of Solbar's mocktails, such as the No-jito with lime, grapefruit, fresh mint, simple syrup, and soda water. aubergeresorts.com/solage.