

Discover

A Hip Urban Wine Tasting Experience



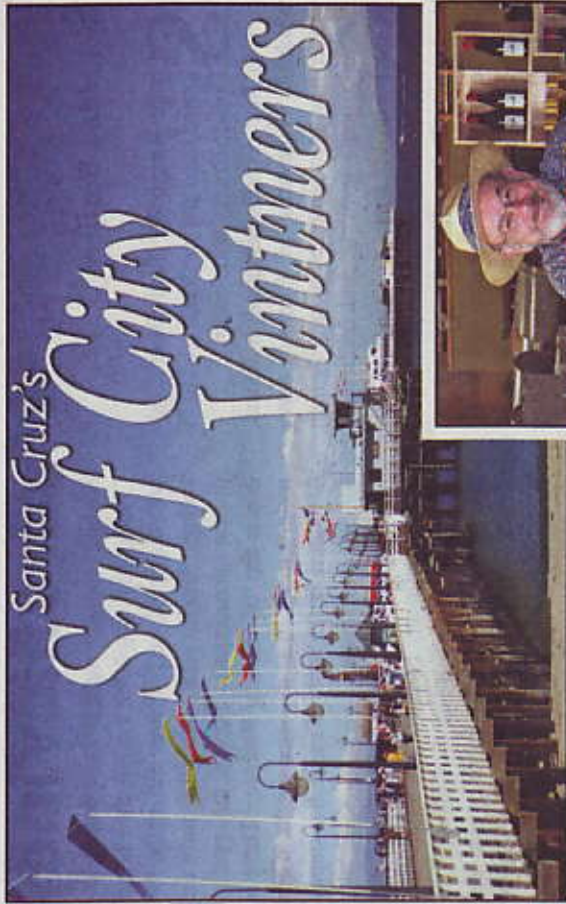
By Mary Lindsay

The Santa Cruz Mountains is home to some 70 boutique wineries. The Surf City Vintners collective of micro-boutique wineries, numbering a dozen, has made the region's namesake town of Santa Cruz a vibrant mecca for wine tasting. An urban renewal project has turned former warehouse space into a hip, trendy destination that also includes Kelly's French Bakery, the New Leaf organic market, and some darling little



shops. All are in renovated warehouse spaces on Ingalls and Swift Streets, clustered within an easily walkable couple of blocks on the Westside of town off of Hwy. 1 near UC Santa Cruz; and Storrs Winery is nearby in the Old Sash Mill.

Spend an afternoon in the tasting rooms, many of which are right inside the wineries with the fermentation tanks and barrels. You can actually see the wine process and inhale the heady aromas of wine as it is created. Some of the oldest and newest wineries in the Santa Cruz



Mountains are here. Most are small, family owned and operated local businesses. The winemakers themselves are usually there and happy to share their stories, as well as their wines.

You will find a wide variety to taste: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Zinfandel, Cabernet; and some of the unusual, including Spanish and Portuguese varieties at Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard/Quinta Cruz, as well as Durif, Malbec, and Grenache. If you are lucky, as I was recent-

Continued on Page 23

Clockwise from top left: Winemakers Phil Crews (Pelican Ranch), Michael Sones (Sones Cellars), and Barry Jackson (Equinox Champagne Cellar/Bartolo) (Mary Lindsay), Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf (Santa Cruz County CVC/Paul Schraub), Winemaker Joe Miller, Hillcrest Terrace Winery. The tasting room is inside the winery where you can see the production facilities and winemaking in action (Mary Lindsay). Enjoy the sunshine in the courtyard café at Kelly's French Bakery, the tasting rooms of Pelican Ranch, Sones Cellars, and Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard in view down the drive (Mary Lindsay)

Discover: Surf City Vintners

Continued from Page 21

ly, you might have the opportunity to taste a 30-year old library wine from Jeff Emery's earlier winemaking years. A huge bonus is the sparkling wine at Equinox Champagne Cellar.

Silver Mountain is known for its organically-grown estate wines, including its Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noirs. Enjoy the artwork adorning the gallery walls here, as well as at Sones Cellars across the driveway.

Explore the Dooniverse at Bonny Doon's eclectic tasting room; with the option of a private tasting with a Wine Ambassador. Its Cellar Door Café offers up seasonal fare from local producers, under Executive Chef Charlie Parker, and is open for lunch and dinner.

MJA Vineyards offers wine tasting and also the "best coffee in America," according to Forbes Magazine in 2001, grown by the owner at his Kona plantation and sold at the tasting room.

If you want to make your own wine, you can do so at Vino Tabi's custom crush facility, and wine taste there too.

Pelican Ranch (the first tasting room to open at Surf City) and the newly opened Hillcrest Terrace Winery are the passionate second careers for UCSC professors Phil Crews (chemistry) and Joe Miller (astronomy and astrophysics), respectively. Joe Miller has taught UCSC extension courses on enology and wine appreciation for many years.

See the Surf City Vintners website at www.surfcityvintners.com for special tasting events, including Passport Day, Vintners Festival in June, and monthly special tastings each second Saturday.

In the Swift Street Courtyard, Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing serves up a dozen different organic micro-brewed beers and



Enjoying the organically grown estate Chardonnay at Silver Mountain's tasting room and gallery. (Mary Lindsay)

ales. Sit on the patio and connect to free wi-fi from your laptop. You can also bask in the sun at the courtyard café at Kelly's Bakery, and enjoy a sandwich or scrumptious dessert. The patio is dog-friendly, so bring your furry friend.

Explore the little shops, including soaps and gifts at Scentsations; boutique clothing at Cameron Marks and The Vintage Store. For yamies there is The Swift Stitch, and Le Salon Cruz for a beauty break.

One street away is the Frans Lanting Gallery, with an exhibit of stunning wildlife photographs from around the world.

Saturday mornings year round the Westside Farmers Market sets up at 2801 Mission St. (at Western Dr.), only a couple of blocks away, where dozens of local farmers offer fresh, mostly organic, produce.

Create a picnic from the gourmet cheeses and takeout bar at the New Leaf market and head down the street to the Natural Bridges State Beach, less than half a mile away. At UCSC's Seymour Marine Discovery Center on the other side of the park you can view the science exhibits and aquarium, and hold in your hand sea crea-

Continued on Page 28

Discover: Surf City Vintners

Continued from Page 23

tures from the seawater table. The Center is the University's laboratory for ocean field research, and is open to the public. Then you can bike or walk the 1.5 miles along West Cliff Drive to the roller coaster and rides at the Boardwalk, passing Lighthouse point along the way where you can take in the Surfer Museum and watch the surfers at Steamer's Lane.

So spend a delightful afternoon at the Surf City Vintners at their Westside enclave, then dine at any one of a number of excellent Santa Cruz restaurants. Ask your tasting room hosts for recommendations, or visit www.santacruz.org (the Santa Cruz County Conference & Visitors Council).

The Surf City Vintners, an organized group of wineries located on the West Side of Santa Cruz include: Copious Winery; Equinox Champagne Cellar; Hillcrest Terrace Winery; MJA Vineyards; Odonata

Wines; Pelican Ranch Winery; Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard (including Quinta Cruz); Silver Mountain; Sones Cellars; Storrs Winery and Vineyards; Trout Gulch Vineyards; and Vino Tabi. Tasting room hours vary, check individual wineries at www.surfcityvintners.com.

Bonny Doon Winery: 328 Ingalls St., www.bonnydoonvineyard.com,

Kelly's French Bakery: 402 Ingalls St., www.kellysfrenchbakery.com

Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing: 402 Ingalls St., www.santacruzmountainbrewing.com

New Leaf Community Market 1121 Pacific Ave., www.newleaf.com

UCSC's Seymour Marine Discovery Center at Long Marine Laboratory: 100 Shaffer Road and Natural Bridges State Beach, <http://seymourcenter.ucsc.edu/>.

Frans Lanting Gallery: 207 McPherson Street, www.lanting.com/