



HOWELL MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS

FOOD & WINE

The Best of Napa

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The Best of Napa

How well do you know America's most famous wine region? Here, a selective guide to Napa's 14 subregions (called AVAs), with the top wineries and key grape varieties in each.

By Laurie Daniel

The Napa Valley has become the most famous wine region in the United States. And Napa's vintners have presented such a unified front that it's easy to forget that the valley is a collection of 14 subappellations, or American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), each with its own distinctive personality.

Howell Mountain

Howell Mountain was the first subappellation in Napa Valley to earn AVA status (in 1984). Unlike the mountain appellations on the west side, which start at a 400-foot elevation (some vineyards barely rise above Highway 29), the Howell Mountain AVA, in the eastern Vaca Range, begins at 1,400 feet, above the fog, meaning warmer mornings and cooler afternoon breezes.

While Howell Mountain is known for Cabernets, it is also home to some notable Zinfandels. The Cabernets are concentrated and structured, and many have a subtle herbaceous character that ranges from cedar to dill to black olive, while the Zins are intense but, thanks to the climate here, rarely overripe. Top Cabs include those of ...**Howell Mountain Vineyards**.

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Laurie Daniel travels regularly to the Napa Valley for her weekly wine column, which is published in several California newspapers, including the San Jose Mercury News.

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