



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where is the Mount Veeder appellation?

In Napa Valley, west of Napa and Yountville, within the Mayacamas mountain range that separates Napa and Sonoma Counties.

Why is it called Mount Veeder?

The appellation's principal landmark is Mount Veeder, located at the north end of the AVA. The mountain was named after German Presbyterian pastor, Peter Veeder, who lived in Napa during the Civil War Era. He was known as a great nature lover and enjoyed hiking on the mountain, where the Douglas Firs and Bristlecone Pines reminded him of the forests of his homeland. Until the 1960's, the Mount Veeder area was commonly called "Napa Redwoods", named after the coastal redwoods that are the most eastern in the country.

Why are Mount Veeder AVA wines so rare?

Mount Veeder is the largest AVA within Napa Valley, but nature has limited production to just 1.3% of Napa Valley grapes. Due to the scarcity of plantable sites only about 1,000 acres out of 25 square miles are planted to grapes. Yields on the mountain vineyards are exceptionally low (usually 2-2.5 tons/acre for Cabernet Sauvignon) – about half the Napa Valley average.

What is unique about Mount Veeder AVA's "terroir"?

Mount Veeder may have the most unique growing conditions in California.

- One of only five hillside appellations in Napa Valley.
- Ancient, pushed up, rocky clay seabed is the predominant soil, while the rest of Napa Valley is primarily volcanic.
- The "coolest mountain" in Napa Valley, the only mountain AVA that adjoins Carneros.
- A very wide range of microclimates, due to the many sharp curves and exposures in the mountain.

The exceptional drainage of the mountain slopes (10°-30°) and shallow topsoil (12-24 inches) combine with the unique conditions described above form an environment for wine grapes like nowhere else in California. The bay breezes cool the mountain, resulting in a Bordeaux-like climate; with minimal temperature change (diurnal swing) each day. August temperatures on Mount Veeder are often 10-15 °F cooler than the valley floor, lengthening the growing season by up to three weeks most years. Harvest is usually the last in Napa Valley, sometimes stretching into November. High risk conditions demand limited use of machinery: nearly all vineyard work must be done by hand.

What effect do these conditions have on the grapes and wines?

The drainage and shallow topsoil limit nutrients to the vines, creating very small berries, resulting in a higher skin-to-flesh ratio and very rich flavors. The bay breezes and cooler climate slow the ripening of the grapes and intensify their flavors. The minimal "diurnal swing" in temperature may be why Mount Veeder grapes have uniquely firm yet very supple tannins. The ancient seabed soils impart distinct flavors to the wines (see below).

What flavors distinguish Mount Veeder AVA wines?

Abundant, fine tannins that are a Mount Veeder hallmark, along with exceptional weight and concentration. Red wines often exhibit dark fruit flavors of blackberry/raspberry (“bramblefruit”), sweet herbal notes and deep stony minerality, with forest flora aromatics. Reserve wines are often cellared for 10-plus years, with increasingly distinctive character and complexity. White wines display minerally, luscious stone fruit, hints of citrus and herb aromas and flavors. Texture, richness, and age-worthiness vary according to winemaking techniques.

What is Mount Veeder AVA’s annual production?

About 45,000 cases per vintage are labeled “Mount Veeder” on the label, an increase from past eras, when nearly all Mount Veeder fruit was used to add weight and concentration to other Napa Valley wines. Overall production is about 2,000 tons – about 1.3% of total Napa Valley production (120,000 cases; 75,000 case-equivalent are still used for blending into non-Mount Veeder wines).

How high are the vineyards in Mount Veeder?

Vines begin at about 400 feet and extend to 2,400 feet, the highest vineyard in Napa Valley (Mayacamas), and highest winery, at 2,100 feet (Sky Vineyards).

Why are there so many grape varieties grown on Mount Veeder?

Apart from Cabernet Sauvignon (64% of production), there are at least 16 other varieties grown on the mountain. The contours of the mountain, the north-south reach, and varying elevations create many “nooks and crannies” where small pockets of vines can be planted. Variations in sun and wind exposure mean that mist-loving redwoods grow within a few feet of parched madrones. Similarly, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon grows almost side-by-side, yet in entirely different conditions. Syrah loves the windier, more exposed tops. Growers have discovered other small parcels that are well suited to personal favorites like Petit Verdot, Grüner Veltliner, and Albariño.

What contributions to winemaking have come from Mount Veeder?

One of the secrets of Mount Veeder is the significant contribution its winemakers have made to the art and science of winemaking, as documented in the support for AVA application. Many of these innovations were a response to the rugged conditions on the mountain. Rudolph Jordon introduced cool fermentation and inoculated controlled yeast strains in the late 1800’s at Castle Rock winery (now Yates Family Vineyards). The first vineyard planting of Petit Verdot in California was on Mount Veeder, grown by Arlene and Michael Bernstein in 1973. Cuttings from these vines were shared with many Napa Valley growers in the 1970’s and early 1980’s, so that most of the Petit Verdot in Napa Valley today originated from Mount Veeder. The Bernsteins’ 1977 Cabernet Sauvignon – although it didn’t note it on the label - was California’s first wine with all five red Bordeaux varieties.

When was the Mount Veeder AVA established?

1993. The first recorded wines were made in 1864, by Captain Stelham Wing, from today’s Wing Canyon Vineyard. The first commercial scale winery was Theodore Gier Winery, built in 1900, now the Hess Collection.

Are Mount Veeder wineries open to the public?

Mount Veeder is also a beautiful place to visit with several tasting rooms open to the public and others open by appointment only. Mt Veeder is a favorite of the bicycle crowd with its challenging, winding climbs through the redwoods and breathtaking views of the valley below. Mount Veeder AVA is accessible from Napa via Redwood Road or Oakville via Oakville Grade to Dry Creek Road or Mount Veeder Road.