

# Santa Barbara Wine Country

## Five Wines to Try from California's Central Coast

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Known for its exceptional Pinot-friendly climate, Santa Barbara Wine Country is now home to over 200 vineyards and tasting rooms, making it quite a hot spot for wine lovers. Located about two hours north of Los Angeles, many wine lovers are now choosing to visit Santa Barbara rather than trekking up to the Northern California wine regions. Of course, after Santa Barbara received international fame from the movie *Sideways* in 2004, the demand for Pinot Noir and Central Coast wines have skyrocketed. I recently took a trip up to Santa Barbara Wine Country to see what all the hype was about, and yes, admittedly, do our own *Sideways* tour! Surprisingly, I found myself coming home with many more wines than I had intended on purchasing! Here are two of the five suggestions for wines to try on your visit to the Central Coast and Santa Barbara Wine Country.

### **Alma Rosa 2007 Pinot Noir - Clone 667, La Encantada Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$43).**

With an annual production of only 234 cases, this beauty is only available direct from the winery. The Clone 667 Pinot Noir is a single-clone, single-vineyard Pinot that was pleasantly much bolder than I had expected. I tend to gravitate towards more earthy wines, especially single vineyard designate wines, and this one hit all the right notes. After a beautiful earthy, floral nose, I found myself wanting to chew on the glass with the burst of berry and purple fruit that engulfed my taste buds. Clone 667 has a nice long, lingering finish as well. I was told a little more time in the bottle and the tannins would soften a bit more, but I found it very drinkable now. Wine Enthusiast Magazine recently reviewed this wine and gave it 87 points.

### **Alma Rosa 2007 Pinot Noir - Mt. Eden Clone, El Jabalí Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$43).**

With only 236 cases, this is another wine that is only available at the winery. It should come as no surprise that Alma Rosa Pinot Noirs rank high, given the involvement of Richard Sanford himself. For *Sideways* fans, Sanford Winery was the one Miles proclaims "makes the best Pinot Noir." Richard Sanford owned Sanford winery at the time of the movie, but later sold it to the Terlato Wine Group, and opened Alma Rosa. This particular Pinot is noted to encompass the true Burgundian style of winemaking. This is a pretty complex wine with lots of earthiness, herbal notes, yet still very fruit forward. It was still fairly tannic when I tasted it, but we were told to give this one another couple of years in the bottle and it would soften beautifully. Again, I would have no issues opening a bottle of this one now though. Wine Enthusiast also reviewed this wine and gave it 92 points, noting it suggests agreeability, and would be best after 2009.