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Coombsville: The Secluded, Scenic Napa Wine Destination That You Probably Didn't Know About

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With 30 miles and 16 American Viticultural Areas (AVA)s stretched north to south along Highway 29, Napa Valley is renowned for its legendary wines, luxurious resorts and Michelin-starred restaurants, yet at its southern end lies a region many visitors have yet to explore. Named for Napa's founder, Coombsville is a relatively compact AVA that is not as well-known as its neighbors to the north. Its dense geographic area —

Downtown Napa hems it in to the northwest and American Canyon to the south — makes it more intimate than Yountville or Calistoga, and the slower pace of development here means a mellower vibe and a mere sprinkling of up-valley’s glitz. With its small farms and neighborhood feel, think of Coombsville as a nature hike with wine.

Shaped like a caldera, a large cauldronlike hollow that forms shortly after the emptying of a magma chamber in a volcanic eruption, Coombsville benefits from pockets of cool breeze and fog that don’t make it up valley. The cooler temperatures are expressed in the region’s wines — sauvignon blanc speaks of grapefruit, not grass, which is typical of other regions in Napa and abroad. In cabernet sauvignon, soft, approachable tannins are the norm, but Coombsville cabernet sauvignon expresses itself most distinctly with flavors of blueberry and violet that are signatures of this southerly region.

Visit **Ackerman Family Vineyards** to taste distinct wines with Coombsville-sourced grapes. The super-Tuscan, sauvignon blanc and cabernet sauvignon of this famed house aptly represent the varietals and flavors of the AVA. Tastings, held at the family’s restored 1888 Victorian a few blocks from downtown Napa, include a house tour. The soaring ceilings, inlaid glasswork and period furniture serve as a reminder of Napa’s relative “New World” youth, while the more modern tasting room in the backyard opens onto a private courtyard.



Ackerman Family Vineyards

Hop in the car and head east to explore Coombsville’s northern side. First, make a pitstop at **Oxbow Market**, the AVA’s beating heart, to grab picnic provisions or slurp up a few Hog Island oysters with a glass of bubbly. Due east from Oxbow lies **Shadybrook Estate** with an expansive patio suitable for socially-distanced tastings. Horse lovers take note: The property incorporates the former Rapp Quarter Horse Ranch, and vineyard tours by horseback are followed by a tasting of wines sourced from the vineyards you recently passed through. The rosé is a standout.



ShadyBrook

For dinner, **The Grove at Copia** embraces the chill Coombsville vibe. The onsite restaurant, helmed by chef Sayat Ozyilmaz, offers a menu of small plates and family-sized platters perfect for celebrating the day, the weather or good health, all with a Middle Eastern twist. Look for whole fried quail with sumac and mango amba or heirloom beets from the garden spiked with Calabrian chile. The outdoor tables are wreathed in sparkling bulbs with views overlooking Copia’s edible gardens.

Until Auberge Resort Collection’s **Stanly Ranch** opens in February, offering 133 suites and cottages with fire pits, outdoor showers and spacious terraces, the only resort currently located within the Coombsville AVA is **Vista Collina**, part of the Meritage Collection.



Vista Collina

It would be easy to spend an entire day on-property: The spa is built into a former wine cave; **Trinitas Cellars** has a tasting room right next to this family-friendly resort; and the property's restaurant, **Olive & Hay**, serves up a fresh yet approachable menu of familiar Italian fare with local style (pizza with mozzarella di bufala and honey, spaghetti with house made Calabrese sausage, Brussels sprouts with maple agrodolce) on the covered patio overlooking the pool and the vineyards beyond.



Olive & Hay

The next day, explore more of Napa's heritage resorts with a visit to **Palmaz Vineyards**. Originally built by Henry Hagan, one of Napa's founders, the property's buildings were resurrected by the Palmaz family, who have roots in Argentina. It follows, then, to try the family's homage to their Argentinian fatherland, Brasas. The blend of cabernet sauvignon and malbec is perfect to savor on their broad terrace.

Even smaller vineyards abound in Coombsville, but are worth seeking out for their personal touch. The vineyard dog, Maggie, is on hand to greet guests with appointments at **Localism**. Recognized for their Coombsville-sourced cabernet sauvignon, Localism produces small lots of sauvignon blanc and an eponymous blended white. **Italics**, too, hosts visitors by appointment only. Guests can sip on the terrace, but sipping wines while walking amongst the vines is just about as Napa Valley as it gets.



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