



THE RICH HISTORY OF TEMECULA VALLEY WINE COUNTRY

Temecula, Calif. – Temecula Valley Wine Country has a rich history of winemaking dating back to the early 1800s when Spanish missionaries first introduced grapevines to the area as part of their mission work. However, it wasn't until the 1960s and 1970s that the modern wine industry in the area began to take shape as it became clear that the region's Mediterranean-like climate and soil composition was suitable for winegrape growing.

In 1964, Hollywood couple Vincenzo Cilurzo and his wife, Audrey, purchased 40 acres of property on a long dirt path known today as Rancho California Road and began planting grapevines. Starting with only a few acres, they eventually expanded their operation to over 100 acres. Their vineyards were primarily planted with Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc grapes, becoming the first commercial vineyard in Temecula Valley and marking the beginning of the winemaking industry in the region.

Callaway Vineyard & Winery marked the beginning of large-scale wine production in the region. In 1974, they opened the first commercial winery in the region, founded by Ely Callaway Jr., who later became known for his Callaway Golf Company. Other wineries soon followed suit, and by the late 1970s, Temecula Valley was home to several wineries, including Mount Palomar Winery, which opened in 1975, and Cilurzo Winery, which produced its first vintage in 1978.

On October 23, 1984, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) established the region as an American Viticultural Area (AVA) with the name Temecula AVA in the Federal Register.

Over the years, the Temecula Valley wine region continued to grow, with more wineries and vineyards being established. In 1997, the Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association (TVWA) was formed to promote the region and its wines. Today, Temecula Valley Wine Country is a popular destination for wine lovers and is known for its picturesque vineyards, award-winning wines, and a variety of events and activities.

In the late 1990s, nearly 40 percent of Temecula Valley vineyards were decimated by Pierce's Disease, a bacterial disease transmitted by the glassy-winged sharpshooter insect, which disables an infected vine from absorbing water. At the onset, The City of Temecula and Riverside County immediately donated funds which launched industry-wide efforts to eradicate the disease. After rapid vineyard loss, which threatened the Temecula Valley AVA and the California wine industry at large, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in collaboration with UC Davis, UC Riverside, and several other U.S. universities, began to study the pest and methods of controlling its spread. Eventually, the California Department of Food and Agriculture established the Pierce's Disease Control Program to assist Temecula Valley in warding off the insect. Since then, winegrowers from all over the world have turned to Temecula to learn these practices – establishing the wine region as a leader in prevention efforts.

Though the crop loss was devastating in the short term, Temecula Valley winegrowers seized the opportunity to replant their vineyards with a broader range of grapes throughout the early 2000s. This greatly expanded the versatility and quality of premium wines produced in the AVA.



On June 18, 2004, The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) renamed the area Temecula Valley AVA – as it is known today.

In 2018, Temecula Valley Wine Country commemorated its 50th anniversary by celebrating the people, their passion, and their perseverance throughout the past five decades. Recently, the region has been recognized by several National publications - in 2019, *Wine Enthusiast* named Temecula Valley one of the 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations in the world; it has also been included in USA Today's *10Best Readers' Choice Awards* for Best Wine Region – a true testament to the talent and dedication of the area's winemakers and the suitability of the region for growing top-quality winegrapes.

In 2021, the TVWA successfully formed the first-ever Temecula Valley Wine and Agricultural Heritage District (TVWAHD). This assessment district funds key programs aimed at marketing Temecula Valley Wine Country as a premium wine travel destination – a groundbreaking accomplishment for the region. Since then, other wine regions have followed suit, modeling their efforts after Temecula Valley and leaning on the TVWA for guidance.

Today, Temecula Valley Wine Country boasts nearly 50 licensed wineries, producing over 500,000 cases annually.

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ABOUT TEMECULA VALLEY WINE COUNTRY

Located within a 60-minute drive from San Diego, Orange County, and Palm Springs – and within 90 minutes of Los Angeles, Temecula Valley is widely recognized as Temecula Valley Southern California Wine Country. The popular wine destination is Southern California's largest wine-producing region by volume. The Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association (TVWA) is a 501 (c) 6 nonprofit regional organization. The TVWA (TemeculaWines.org) is dedicated to promoting the making and growing of quality wine and wine grapes in the Temecula Valley AVA (American Viticulture Area).

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