

CALI'S OTHER CABS

While offerings from Napa continue to take top billing, other regions of the state are producing distinct, expressive bottles worth exploring.



CENTRAL COAST'S CENTRAL PLAYERS

The long history of Central Coast Cabernet Sauvignon is not all glorious. Many of the region's early Cabs were quite green. But better attention to microclimates and viticulture has produced stunning versions, no matter if your palate prefers power or finesse.

Paso Robles is the most direct challenger to the Napa style. The **Parrish Family Reserve** is lush and dense, as is the soft, supple **Benom Origin** by the French-born Fabre brothers. The **Ancient Peaks Santa Margarita Ranch** is a nuanced steal at \$22.

Down in Santa Barbara, former Harlan Estate cellarmaster Adam Henkel's **Crown Point Vineyards** is all about powerful richness. From veteran grape grower Louis Lucas, the **Lucas & Lewellen Cote del Sol** allows herbs and spices to do their trick.

And don't forget the historic Cabs of the Santa Cruz Mountains, like the woody, cellar-ready **Mount Eden Estate** and its equally delicious, lower-priced sister, the **Domaine Eden**. —Matt Kettmann

LIVERMORE, LAKE, MENDOCINO AND BEYOND

A surprising number of Northern California's highly recommended Cabernet Sauvignons don't come from Napa or Sonoma. The Livermore Valley boasts reliable and balanced Cabs from stalwarts **Wente Vineyards** and **Concannon Vineyard**, as well as up-and-comers like **Dante Robere**, **Darcie Kent**, **Steven Kent Winery** and **Ruby Hill**.

Lake County, which borders Napa County on the north side, is home to producers **Hawk and Horse Vineyards** and **Obsidian Ridge**, both of which make ageworthy, estate-grown Cabernets with luxury price tags. Napa-based **Spoto Family Wines** also just released a premium bottling from here, **Beckstoffer Amber Knolls Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon**. Closer to the coast, two Mendocino County wines are must-buys for their quality-to-price ratios: **McNab Ridge Family Reserve Largo** and the **Barra Estate Grown**.

Michael David Winery's new **Rapture Cabernet**, from the fertile soil of Lodi, sets a high bar on indulgence. To the east, in high-elevation El Dorado County, **Lava Cap Winery** can do no wrong lately, as evidenced by its muscular, estate-bottled Cabernet. —Jim Gordon