

# Wine Spectator

WineSpectator.com

## THE WORLD'S GREATEST VINEYARDS

ROMANÉE-CONTI  
TO KALON  
MONTRACHET  
QUINTA DO NOVAL NACIONAL  
L'ENCLOS  
TIGNANELLO  
JJ COHN RANCH  
LA LANDONNE  
MASSETO  
WEHLENER SONNENUHR

**GLOBAL VALUES • WHITE BURGUNDY  
CALIFORNIA ZINFANDEL • TRAVEL TO SPAIN  
BIG WINE PLAYER DECLARES BANKRUPTCY**

# The World's Greatest Vineyards

Our Editors' Picks for the top 10 Terroirs Around the world



It's the first commandment of wine—it all starts in the vineyard. But what makes a great vineyard? And what elevates a select few from great to iconic?

There is an interplay between soils, location, climate and history that makes certain spots ideal for growing breathtaking wines. But the proof is in the bottle. Certain terroirs produce outstanding wine not just year after year but decade after decade. What's more, those wines set a benchmark.

It's easier for beginning wine drinkers to follow their favorite grapes or brands. But terroir is much more immutable. As you'll read, it withstands the test of time. And it's the way in which the best wines on earth speak of a specific site that keeps us coming back for more.

To identify the best vineyards from thousands around the world, we asked Wine Spectator's senior editors to nominate candidates from their regions.

They submitted dozens of sites. We narrowed the list by focusing on those that truly stand apart—places that have unique soils and special microclimates that define the wines, but also those with a documented history of excellence. Many of these vineyards have not only produced classic wines, their bottlings have shaped the larger world of wine. Some have revitalized forgotten regions. Some have changed the way we think about wine itself. Those are our top 10 vineyards.

In addition, we profile 20 other world-class sites. Several of these have less history to rest on but have also made some of our favorite wines and have had a big impact on their regions. Have we left anyone out? That's a perpetual risk with identifying the greats. But such debates are what makes wine fascinating. So pour a glass of one of your favorites, sit back and dig deep into our look at the greatest wine terroirs on earth.





## To Kalon, Oakville, Napa Valley

This is the most famous vineyard in America, the source of some of Napa Valley's most revered Cabernet Sauvignons. It's the best example of why Oakville is an ideal place for growing that grape. It's iconic enough that winemakers go to court for the right to put its name on their label. It's the spot where Robert Mondavi decided to found his namesake winery that would define modern American wine.

In 1868, Hamilton Walker Crabb, an Ohio native who moved west looking for gold, came to Napa Valley and purchased 240 acres in Oakville. Crabb planted grapes and named his land Hermosa Vineyards. He bought two adjacent parcels, in 1879 and 1891. In 1886, he renamed his winery and the vineyard To Kalon, Greek for "the place of highest beauty." In the decades after his death, the land would be split up and sold, a significant chunk of land to the south would be added, and then Robert Mondavi trademarked the name. Today, Robert Mondavi Winery's parent company, Constellation Brands, says To Kalon is a registered brand, not a place. Only a few wineries are permitted to use the name on their wines.

While the debate is messy, it is proof that To Kalon's terroir is special. It's a large property, with several hundred acres, located on a bench just downhill of the Mayacamas mountains on the edge of the valley floor.

Oakville lies halfway between the cool breezes of Carneros and the hot temperatures in Calistoga. To Kalon creek runs down from the Mayacamas, and over the centuries it and the shifting Napa River scattered rocks and minerals in alluvial fans throughout the property, creating a gravelly loam soil, less fertile than the center of the valley.

And there are multiple parcels with endless variations in soil and microclimate, vines of varying ages, clones, rootstocks and trellising techniques. The result is opulent Cabernets that still have structure and complexity. To Kalon is complex, but that is what makes it one of the world's greatest vineyards.

### Facts & Stats

- **Vines first planted:** 1868
- **Vine age:** Varies; oldest date to 1954
- **Size:** Disputed, between 359 and 1,000 acres
- **Soil:** Gravelly loam
- **Grapes:** Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot
- **Owners:** Constellation Brands (which owns a trademark to the To Kalon name), Beckstoffer Vineyards, Opus One, Detert, MacDonald, University of California, Davis

– *Mitch Frank*