

Santa Lucia Highlands' Appellation At-A-Glance

A.V.A. Established 1991

Current planted acreage: approx. 6,100 acres

Vineyard Properties: 45



Santa Lucia Highlands
Wine Artisans

The earliest *vinifera* plantings, in what was to become the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation, took place in the 1790s, with the arrival of the first Spanish missionaries and conquistadors. The modern era, however, began in the early 1970s, with initial plantings by Rich and Claudia Smith at Paraiso, the McFarland family at Sleepy Hollow, Phil Johnson at La Estancia, and Nicky Hahn at Smith & Hook.

Approved in 1991 by the Federal government as a unique AVA, the vineyards here are planted on the terraces of the Santa Lucia mountain range, overlooking the Salinas River Valley. Glacial alluvial soils pair with ocean fog and breezes to create a true Region I climate. The vines' elevated locations take full advantage of the morning sunshine before the afternoon maritime breezes cool the vineyards. This climatic combination results in early budbreak and prolonged harvests; the exceptionally long growing season allows the grapes to fully develop maximum varietal potential. Cool weather-loving Burgundian varieties Chardonnay and Pinot Noir flourish here. Riesling is enjoying a Renaissance in the Highlands. And the Rhone grape types emulate their French northern districts' brethren, thriving on the SLH's slightly warmer, more wind-protected canyons and slopes.

Today, over 6,000 wine grape acres are currently under cultivation, with the majority heavily weighted toward Pinot Noir (2,500) and Chardonnay (2,100). Winegrowers of the Santa Lucia Highlands are innovators - almost every single vineyard is a living laboratory, with new clones, trellising systems, and farming regimens being constantly explored. "Growing Green" is more than a catch phrase in the Highlands; conscientious viticultural standards, whether organic, biodynamic, or sustainable, have long been the norm here.

At SantaLuciaHighlands.com, you'll find in-depth information on this world-class winegrowing district, including vineyard profiles, interactive maps, and links to the various producers...