

SONOMA COUNTY  
- CALIFORNIA -  
WINE TASTING BLOG

# 2023 SONOMA WINE TASTING REPORT



## Contents

3	Executive Summary
8	Market Spotlight: Geyserville
9	Market Spotlight: Healdsburg
10	Market Spotlight: Santa Rosa
11	Market Spotlight: Sebastopol
12	Market Spotlight: City of Sonoma
13	About Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog
14	Methodology
15	Credits

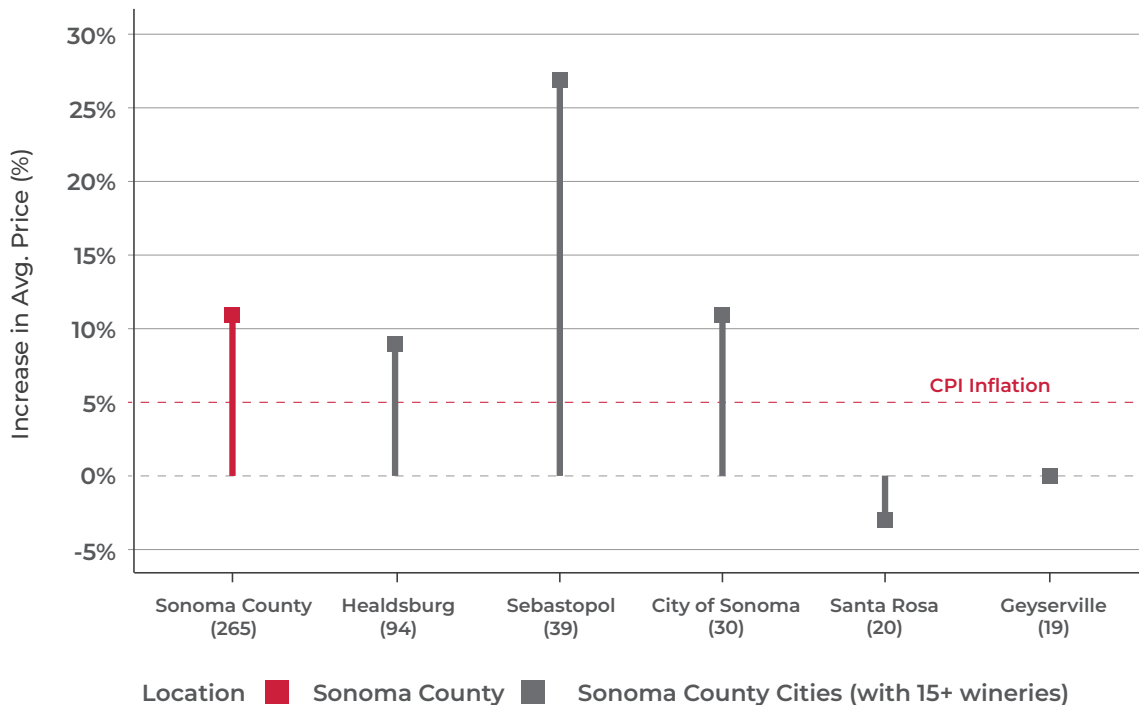


# Executive Summary

The price of a basic wine tasting in Sonoma County rose 11% from \$36 in 2022 to \$40 in 2023, more than twice the rate of the CPI inflation rate. Adjusting for those cities with at least 15 wineries in the sample, we found that prices in Sebastopol increased the most at 27%, from an average of \$37.36 in 2022, to \$47.50 in 2023.

## Sonoma Wine Tasting Report

Increase in Average Price from 2022 to 2023



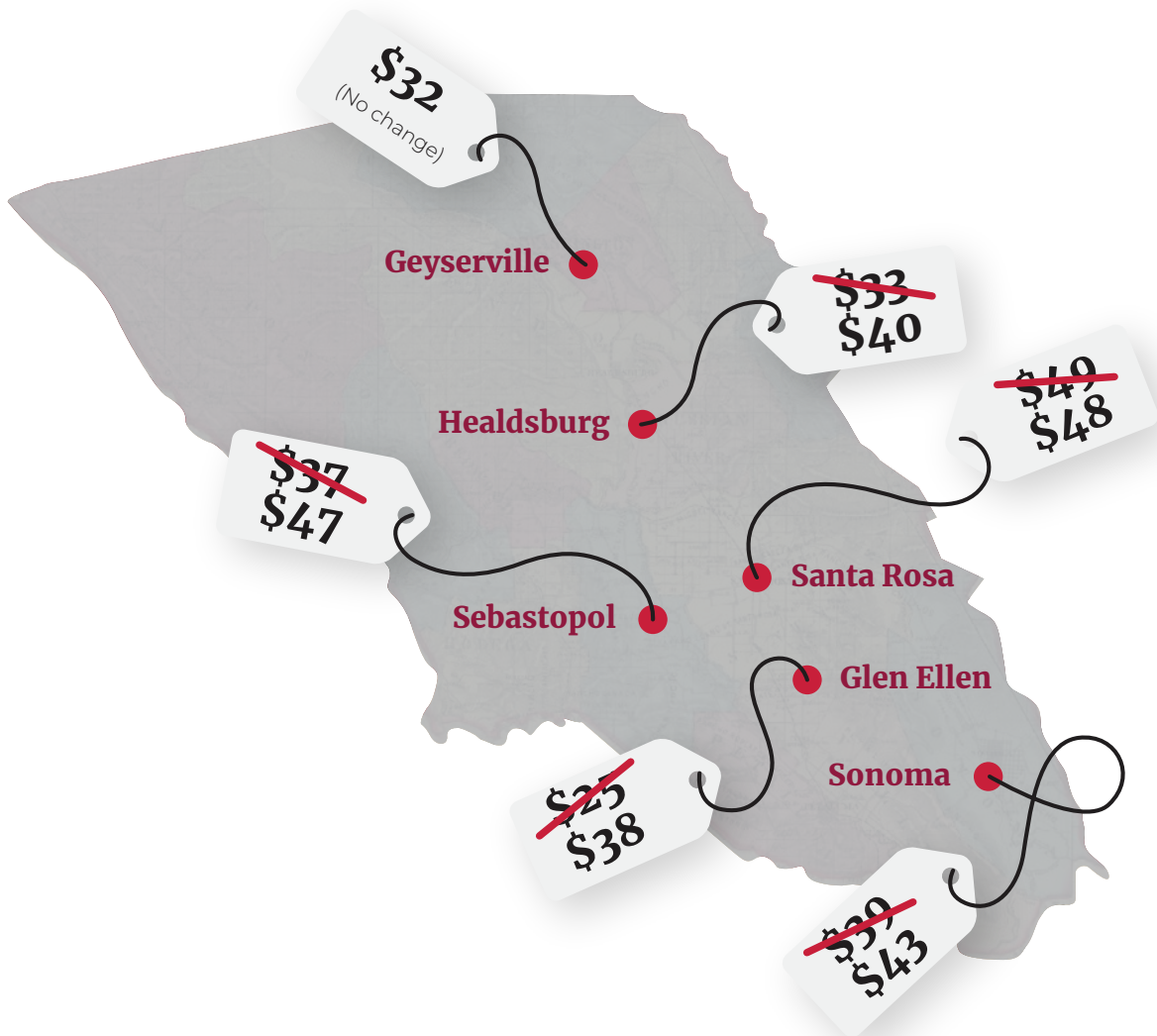
While the 27% jump in Sebastopol is massive, the actual price increase of \$10 is less than the price of one movie theater ticket or a quick-service restaurant meal. The overall impact on consumers is moderate, but the study shows that wine tasting room prices still appear to be rising, despite the Federal Reserve’s attempts to tame inflation with interest rate hikes.

In 2023, sixty percent of Sonoma wine tasting rooms kept their prices the same, 30% increased, and 10% decreased prices. The second sharpest gains in the county were prices up 11% in the City of Sonoma and 9% in Healdsburg. Prices decreased by 3% in Santa Rosa, and Geyserville winery tasting room prices held steady.



# Sonoma Wine Tasting Prices

2022 vs 2023



In our last report tracking pricing before and after the pandemic lockdown in California, we observed a 14% increase in wine tasting room prices in Sebastopol. While this figure falls on the lower end compared to other Sonoma cities included in our analysis, it is important to note that Sebastopol is home to numerous micro wineries. The 27% price increase witnessed in this city may be attributed to a lag effect, with small business owners gradually adjusting their rates to align with the prevailing rates across the county.

## Reservations, Not as Required

Sonoma wineries are easing their reservation policies. In 2022, only 15% of Sonoma wine tasting rooms accommodated walk-ins. But in 2023, that number rose to 26% as more Sonoma wineries sought to accommodate spontaneous arrivals.

Santa Rosa has the highest number of wineries that accept walk-ins at 36%, followed by the City of Sonoma at 31%, Geyserville at 30%, Sebastopol at 22%, and Healdsburg at 17%.

## Wine Tastings with Food Pairings

Although wine tastings that include food pairings tend to be considered higher-value, just 12% of entry-level wine tastings in Sonoma County include food pairings of any kind. Sebastopol has the most wineries with entry-level tastings that include food pairings, which may also explain the price increases, given the rising food costs.

Wine tastings in Sonoma County that include food pairings are priced 58% higher than wine tasting experiences that do not include food. While food pairings menus differ from winery to winery, they generally include single-bite delicacies such as cured porks, cheeses, olives, nuts, crackers, and/or dried fruits selected to enhance the flavor of the varietal poured.

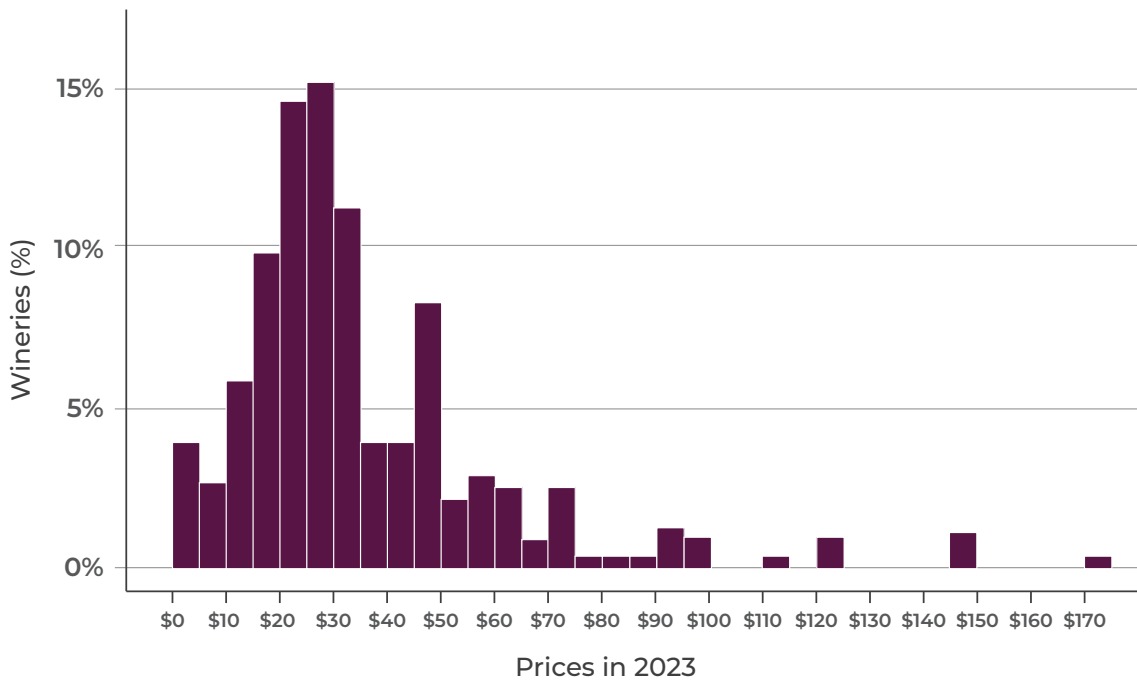
The average price of a wine tasting experience in Sonoma County, which includes food pairings, is \$59. By city, the average price of wine tastings that include food pairings is \$87 in the City of Sonoma, \$70 in Santa Rosa, \$57 in Sebastopol, \$52 in Healdsburg, \$45 in Glen Ellen, and \$25 in Geyserville.



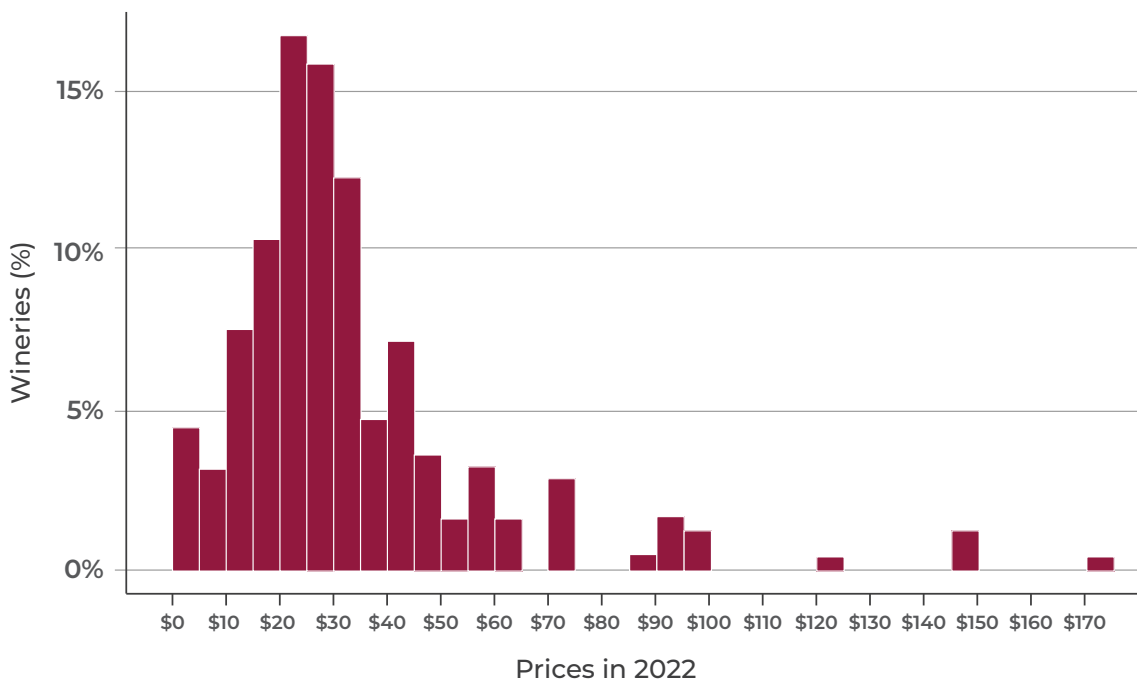
## Pricing Distribution

These two graphs visualize the changes in Sonoma wine tasting room pricing distribution by wineries from 2022 to 2023, where the percentage is the percentage of wineries at a given price.

**Sonoma County Tasting Rooms (252)**

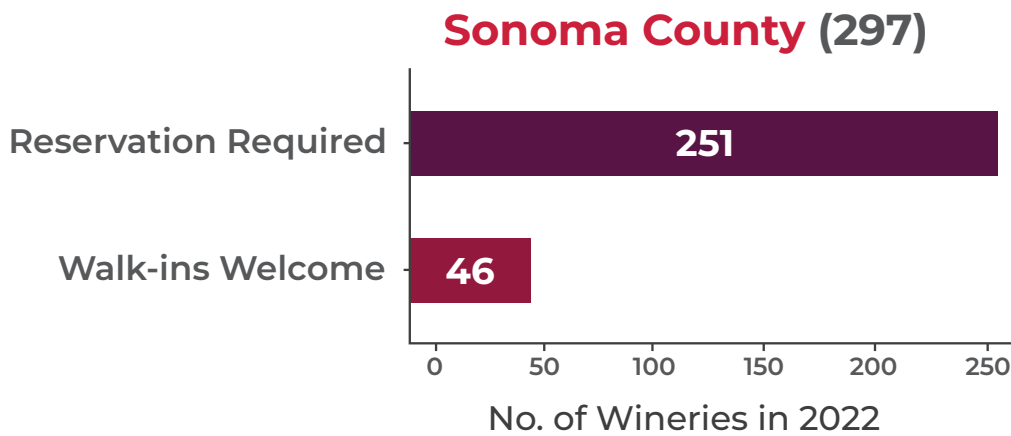
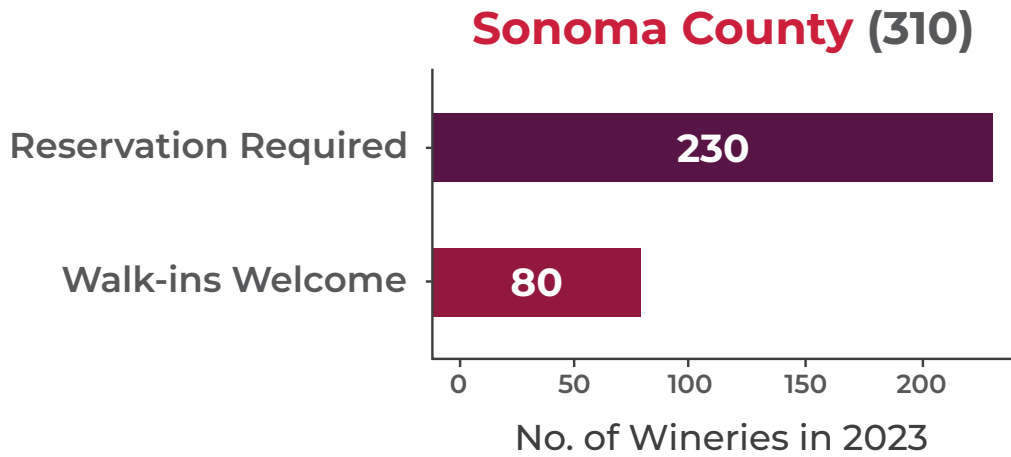


**Sonoma County Tasting Rooms (252)**



## Reservations vs. Walk-Ins

Sonoma County saw a huge increase in wineries accepting walk-in customers, from 15% in 2022 to 26% in 2023, showing increased demand for spontaneous arrivals.



# Market Spotlight: Geyserville

## Quick Stats

19	wineries sampled
\$0	minimum price
\$125	maximum price
11%	include food pairings
30%	accept walk-ins

## Prices Flat



Of all Sonoma County cities with more than 15 wineries in the pricing sample, Geyserville is the only city where wine tasting room prices were flat. It also had the largest increase change in wineries accepting walk-ins. In 2022, only 5% of Geyserville wineries accepted walk-ins in their tasting rooms.

But in 2023, the number spiked to 30% of Geyserville wineries accepting walk-ins. Portions of the Alexander Valley, North Coast, and Northern Sonoma American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) intersect with Geyserville.

## Geyserville Tasting Rooms (19)

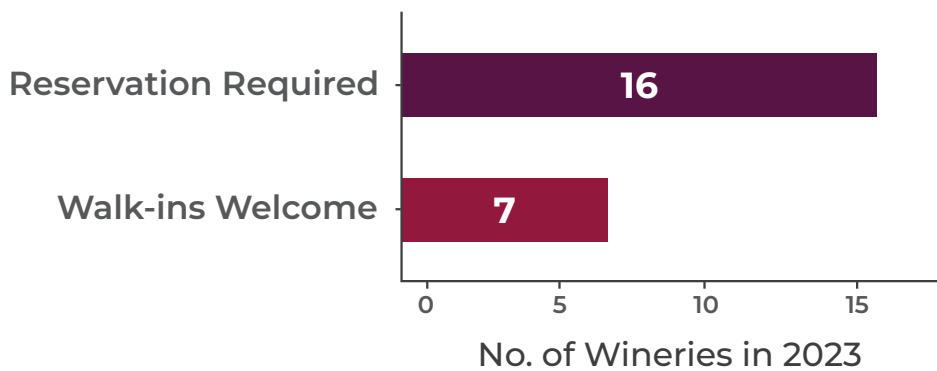




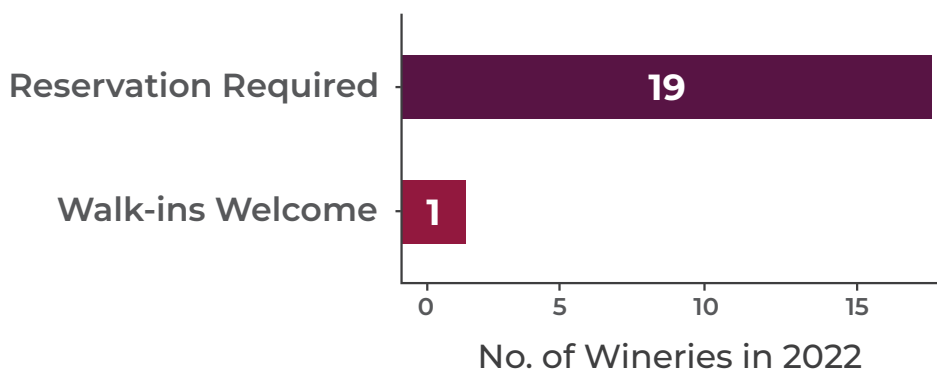
## Geyserville Tasting Rooms (17)



## Geyserville (23)



## Geyserville (20)



# Market Spotlight: Healdsburg

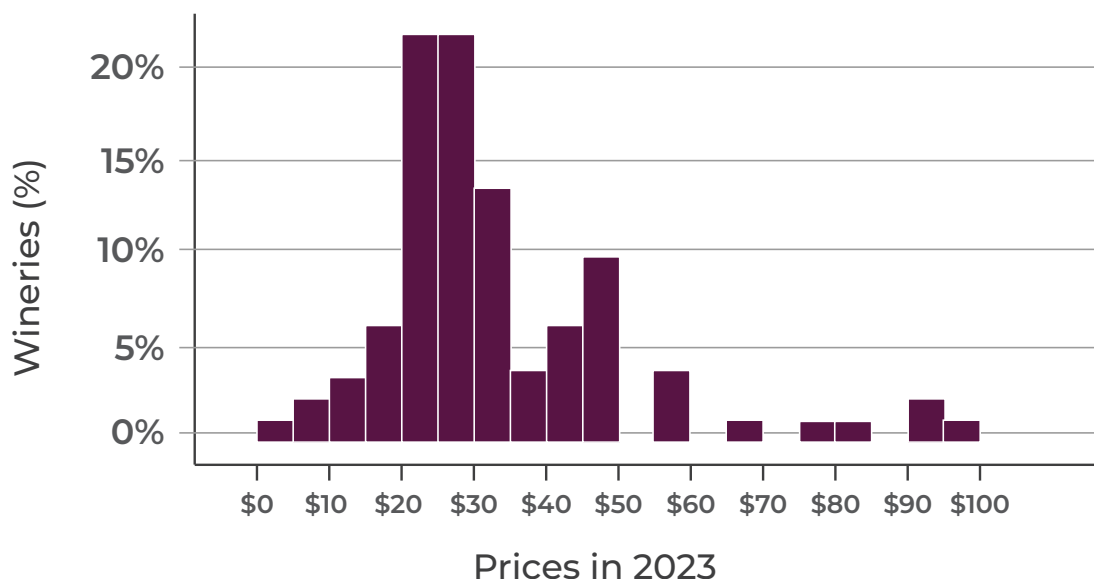
## Quick Stats

- 94 wineries sampled
- \$0 minimum price
- \$100 maximum price
- 8% include food pairings
- 17% accept walk-ins

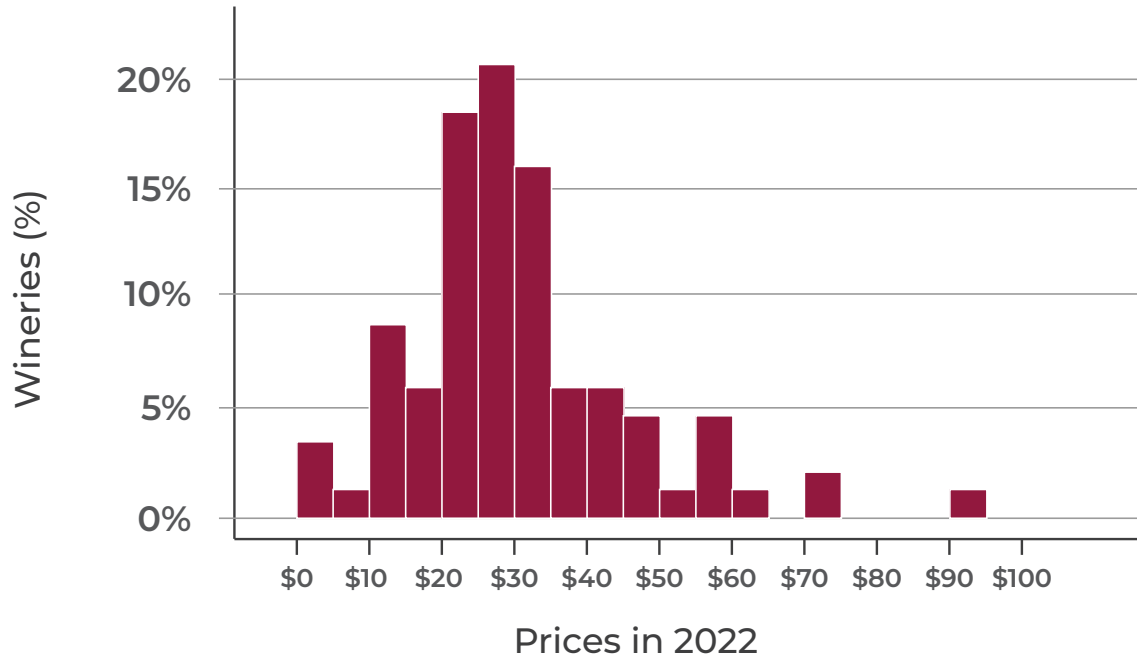


Prices were up 9% in Healdsburg, the fifth most populous city in Sonoma County. The Russian River wraps around the Healdsburg downtown area, which has a dense commercial district surrounding a central plaza. But despite the foot traffic, only 5% more Healdsburg wine tasting rooms are accepting walk-ins this year. Portions of the North Coast, Northern Sonoma, the Russian River Valley, and the Sonoma Coast American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) intersect with the City of Healdsburg.

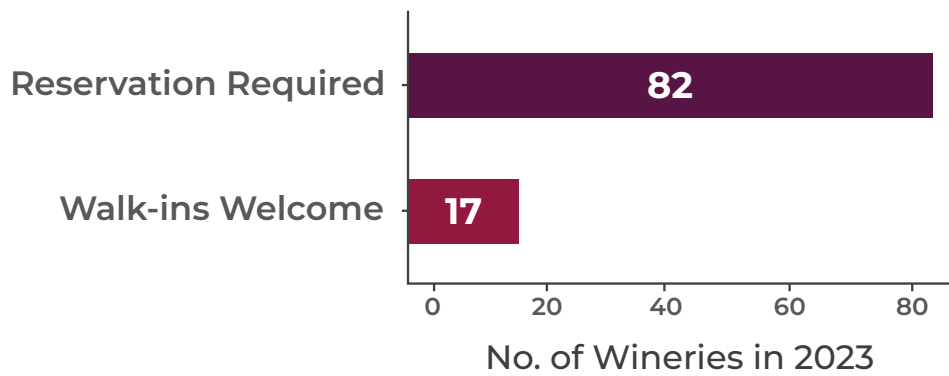
## Healdsburg Tasting Rooms (94)



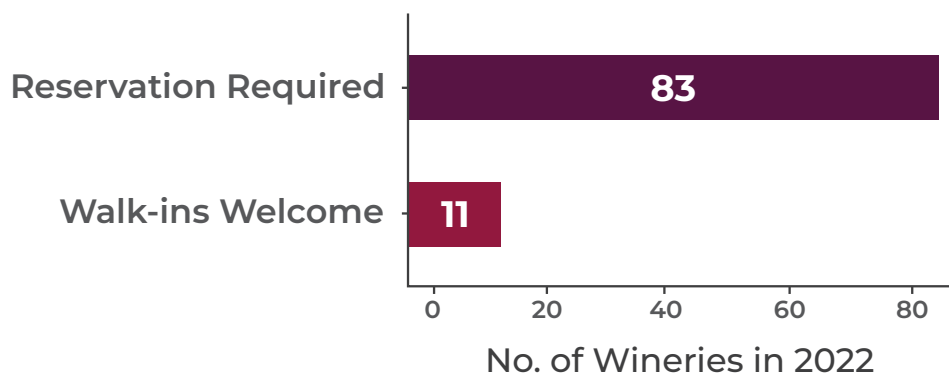
## Healdsburg Tasting Rooms (87)



## Healdsburg (99)



## Healdsburg (94)



# Market Spotlight: Santa Rosa

## Quick Stats

20	wineries sampled
\$5	minimum price
\$150	maximum price
5%	include food pairings
36%	accept walk-ins

## Prices Down

↓ -3%

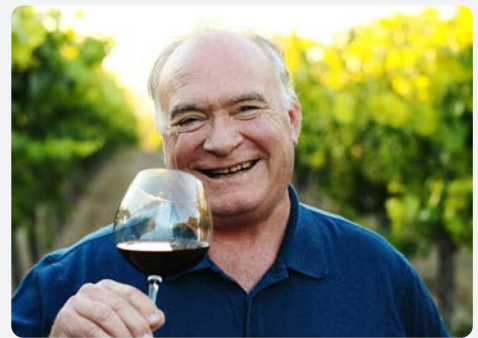


Sonoma County wine tasting prices were down 3% in Santa Rosa, which is the most populous city in the County with 178,000 residents. The number of wine tasting rooms accommodating walk-in guests more than doubled from 14% in 2022, to 36% in 2023. But Santa Rosa still has the most expensive average wine tasting room prices, and the fewest that include food pairings with the entry-level tastings in all of Sonoma County. Portions of the North Coast and Sonoma Coast American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) intersect with the City of Santa Rosa.

## Santa Rosa Tasting Rooms (20)



## Local Tasting Room Profile Balletto Vineyards



“

People are coming back into the tasting room. We built a new patio and started bringing in live music on Saturdays and Sundays.

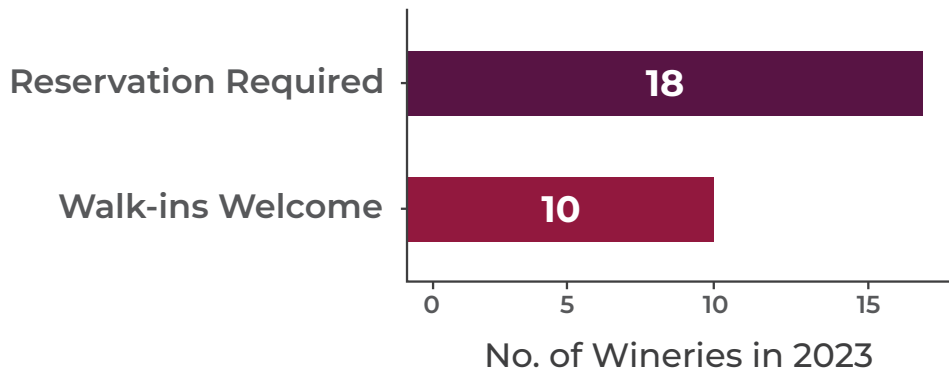
*John Balletto, Founder and Owner, Balletto Vineyards*

Cost	\$20 per person
Food Pairings	No
Format	Casual Seated
Venue	Balletto Vineyards Tasting Room
Location	Santa Rosa
Hours	Daily from 10 am to 5 pm
Outdoor Seating	Yes
Varietals	Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Sparkling Brut Rosé, Syrah, Zinfandel
Annual Production	32,334 cases
Wheelchair Accessible	Yes
Young Children Allowed	Yes
Pet Friendly	Yes (on a leash)
Reservations Required	No
Serving Size	1 to 2 oz.
No. of Wines Served per Tasting	4 Closed on Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, and Easter

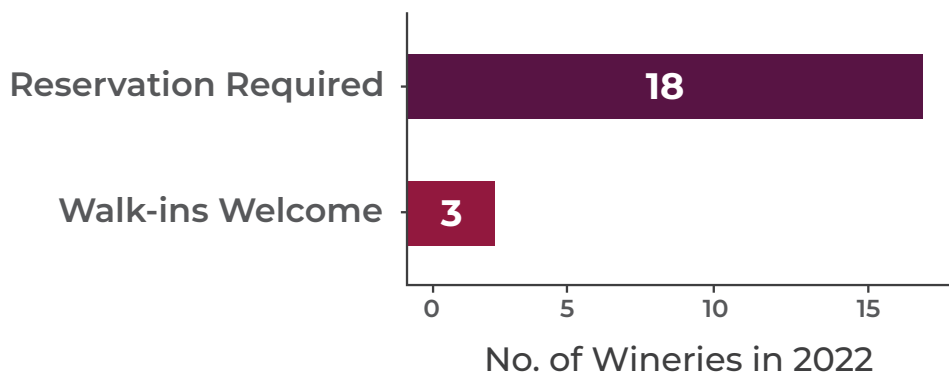
### Santa Rosa Tasting Rooms (16)



### Santa Rosa (28)



### Santa Rosa (21)





# Market Spotlight: Sebastopol

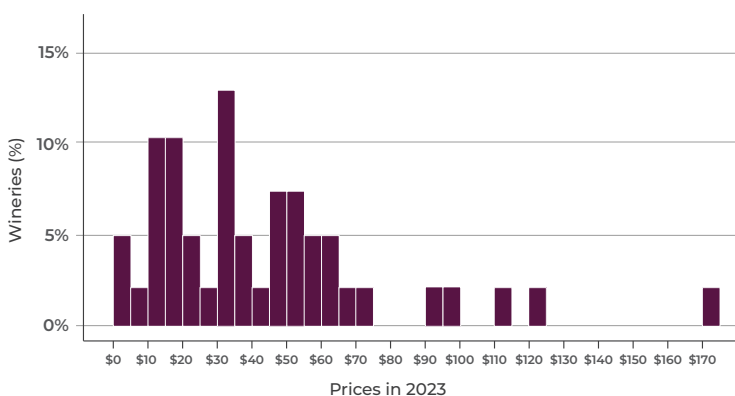
## Quick Stats

40	wineries sampled
\$0	minimum price
\$175	maximum price
18%	include food pairings
22%	accept walk-ins



Sonoma County wine tasting room prices were up the most this year in Sebastopol, the eighth most populous city in the County. It is important to note that Sebastopol prices were up the least in our last report, so the increases were probably overdue. Sebastopol prices are now on par with Santa Rosa. There are more winery tasting rooms in Sebastopol that include food pairings with entry-level wine tastings than any other Sonoma County destination, which could also explain 27% price increase, given rising food costs. The number of Sebastopol wineries accommodating walk-in guests in their tasting rooms doubled from 10% in 2022, to 22% in 2023. Portions of the Green Valley of Russian River Valley, North Coast, Northern Sonoma, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, and West Sonoma Coast American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) intersect with Sebastopol.

## Santa Rosa Tasting Rooms (20)



## Local Tasting Room Profile Fog Crest Vineyard

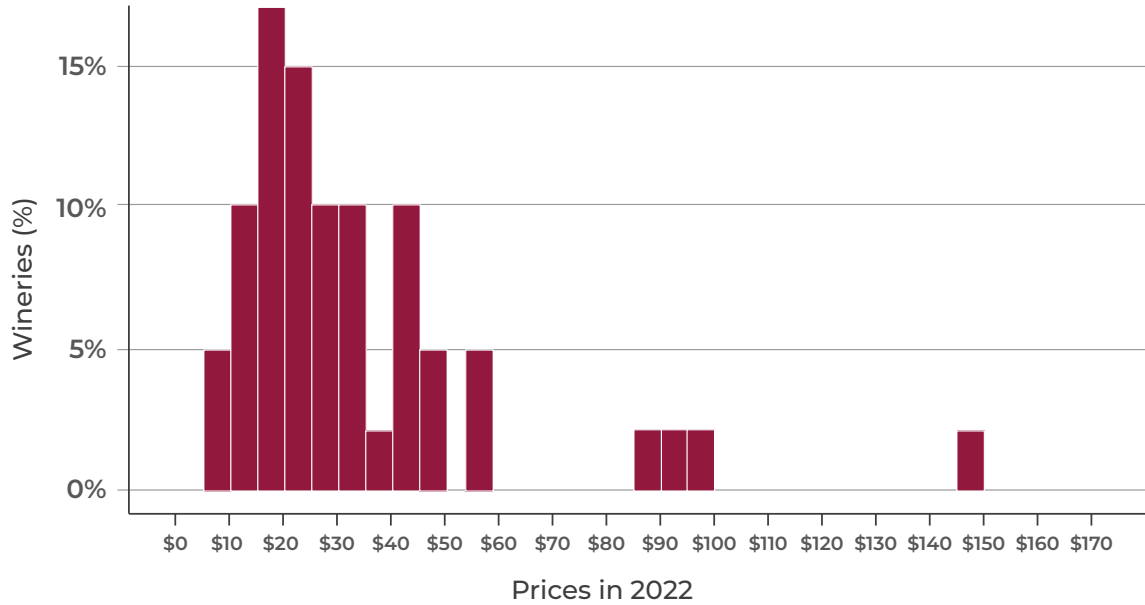


There's a lag in pricing increases. So I would say the reason that Sebastopol's price increases lagged is based on the nonconforming nature of the area itself. When we started back in February 2014, tastings were still free here, and in other places, they weren't.

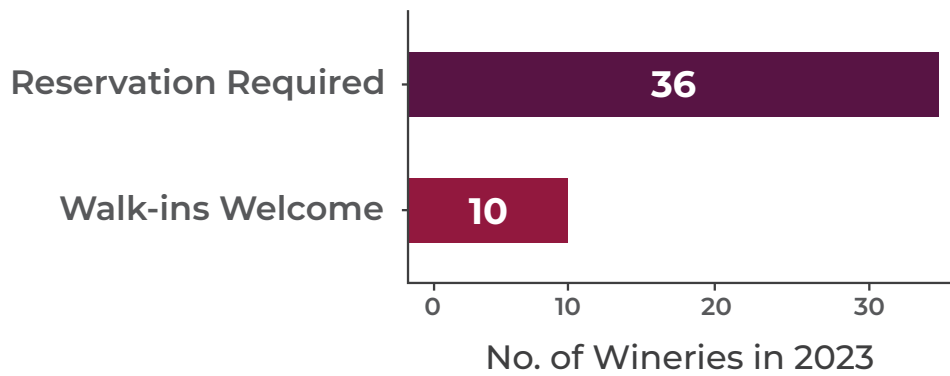
*Rosalind Manoogian, President of Fog Crest Vineyards*

Cost	\$30
Food Pairings	Yes
Format	Casual Seated
Venue	Vineyard Tasting Room
Location	Sebastopol
Hours	Daily from 11 am to 5 pm
Outdoor Seating	Yes
Varietals	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Rosé
Annual Production	Less than 5,000 cases
Wheelchair Accessible	Yes
Young Children Allowed	Yes
Pet Friendly	Yes
Reservations Required	Yes
Serving Size	1 oz.

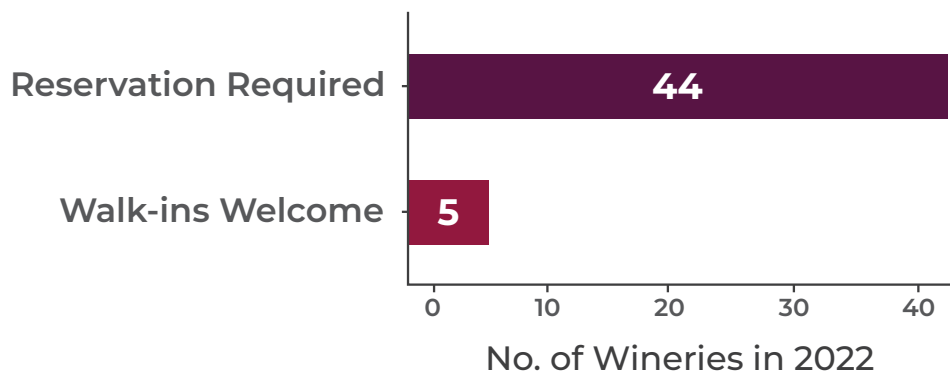
## Healdsburg Tasting Rooms (87)



## Healdsburg (99)



## Healdsburg (94)



# Market Spotlight: City of Sonoma

## Quick Stats

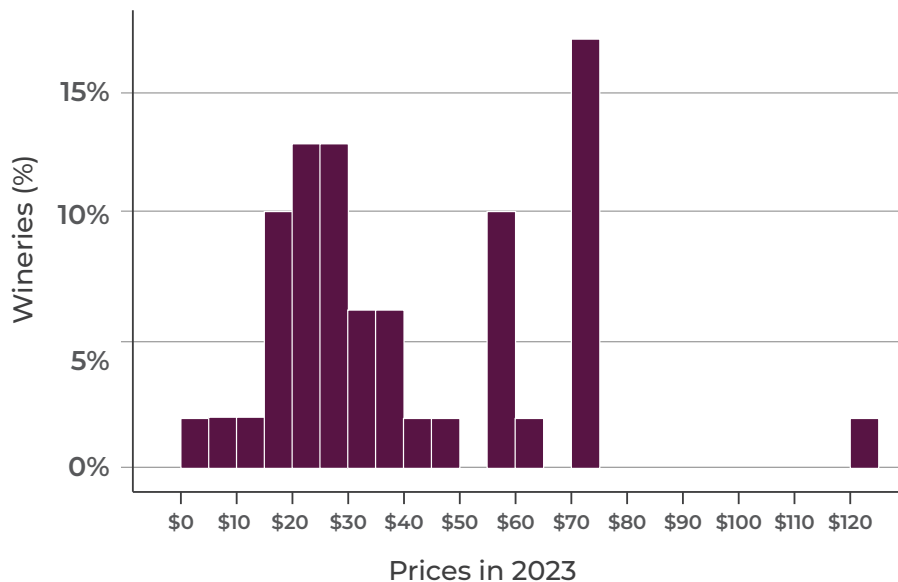
30	wineries sampled
\$0	minimum price
\$125	maximum price
12%	include food pairings
31%	accept walk-ins



Sonoma wine tasting prices were up 11% in the historic City of Sonoma in the heart of the renowned Sonoma Valley winemaking region. There were no changes in the number of City of Sonoma wineries accepting walk-in guests in their tasting rooms from 2022 to 2023.

It is known for its wine-tasting rooms, craft shops, art galleries, and the colonial-era Sonoma Plaza, surrounded by 19th-century adobe structures. The City of Sonoma is the sixth most populous city in Sonoma County.

## Healdsburg Tasting Rooms (94)



## Healdsburg Tasting Rooms (87)



## Healdsburg (99)



## Healdsburg (94)



# About Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog

The Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog is a top online destination for visitors seeking accurate, up-to-date, informed guidance on Sonoma wine tasting experiences. We focus exclusively on Sonoma County wineries, known for cool climate varietals such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah. The Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog focuses on wines from grapes grown in one of the 19 Sonoma County American Viticulture Areas (AVAs).

In addition to covering Sonoma wine tasting experiences, we also write about the different Sonoma wine varietals, the local environment, sustainable viticulture, food pairings, and wine reviews. The Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog is sponsored by Halleck Vineyard, a micro winery committed to building community through wine. Articles that appear on the Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog are edited and written by a staff of independent freelance wine writers.





# Methodology

As in our previous report, our main focus was assessing how wine tasting prices change over time in Sonoma County, California. In this report, we compared data from 2022 and 2023, benchmarking our results against an inflation rate of 5%, corresponding to the CPI-U index provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>1</sup>, over a yearly period ending at our last data collection date (March 2022 to March 2023). We also looked into wineries' reservation policies to assess how many of them allow walk-ins and how many operate on a reservation-only basis.

We focused on entry-level tastings (see below) but made no distinction between the many possible types of wine tasting experiences: formal seated, casual seated, and wine tasting with a sommelier or vineyard tour. However, we collected data on which tastings included food pairings in 2023 and used it to investigate if they cost more than tastings that do not include food pairings.

After speaking with representatives from some tasting rooms, we found that even though types of wine and serving sizes vary, most of these venues include five different wine varietals and an 0.5 to 1.0 oz. serving size.

Since we considered only entry-level prices, it also warrants mentioning that small wineries typically have a single tasting menu. In contrast, larger hospitality centers operated by major wineries like E.J. Gallo and Kendall Jackson offer many options.

Data collection for this report took place over a two-week period in March 2022. All data was collected manually from the websites of Sonoma County wineries licensed by the California Dept. of Alcoholic Beverage Control to serve alcohol. To locate the websites of the wineries, we searched the winery name plus keywords like "wine tasting," "tasting fee," or "tasting room" to locate the tasting room pages and pricing. This process was repeated until no new results came up, making us confident that our sample is a good representation of the wine tasting market in Sonoma County. Almost all data came from the wineries' websites (324 from all the 340 wineries sampled), with the remaining coming from other wine-related websites.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) (Accessed at May 16, 2023)

<sup>2</sup> R Core Team. R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing. Retrieved from <https://www.R-project.org>

<sup>3</sup> Wickham H (2016). ggplot2: Elegant Graphics for Data Analysis. Springer-Verlag New York, <https://ggplot2.tidyverse.org>.





Although we collected pricing data for wineries in Windsor, Forestville, Petaluma, Kenwood, Fulton, Calistoga, Cazadero, Bodega Bay, Jenner, Annapolis, and Garton, in this report we opted only to break out markets that had at least 15 wineries since we deemed smaller sample sizes to be statistically irrelevant. Averages are already very susceptible to distortions caused by low sample size, and calculating percentages using two averages (means) with low sample sizes only magnifies this problem

We aimed at the entry-level wine tasting market by selecting only the least expensive tasting offered by each winery. Free wine tastings were kept and regarded as having a \$0 price. A single \$295 price (from the city of Windsor, in 2022) was considered an outlier and removed from the sample since it was substantially higher than any other price (the next were \$175 and \$150), distorting the overall results.

All analyses were done using R programming language and statistical environment, and all graphs were produced using the R package ggplot2. Additional exploratory analyses and basic statistics (like median, quartiles, and standard deviations), not shown in this report, were also used to support our conclusions.

Histograms and bar charts were produced using the “R” data visualization language, with the Rstudio software package. The histograms were created with bins starting on 0\$ and a binwidth of 5\$ (so the first increment is from 0 to 4, the second from 5 to 9, etc). Bar charts were created using the “ggplot2” package. R Core (Team 2022) R is a programming language and environment for statistical visualizations by [R Foundation for Statistical Computing](#) in Vienna, Austria.



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## Credits

This report was produced and written by Eric Schwartzman, editor, and publisher of the [Sonoma Wine Tasting Blog](#) and author of [The Digital Pivot: Secrets of Online Marketing](#). Survey data was collected by researcher Edcen Ramos with data cleansing, analysis, and visualizations prepared by Marcelo de Andréa Segall, PhD. Graphic design by Rizwan Shafique.