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# sonoma county south

## EAT

**El Dorado Kitchen, Sonoma** On a warm summer evening, the poolside dining area at El Dorado Kitchen offers an especially good way to enjoy what executive chef Ryan Fancher (a former sous chef at the French Laundry) calls the "food of the sun"—that is, food showcasing fresh, seasonal produce. It would be easy to fill up on the fritto misto starter: a heaping plate of sunchoke, green beans, and slices of fennel bulbs ever-so-slightly deep-fried in a corn-and-buttermilk batter. But save room for the other best-of-the-season dishes. In early June, English peas starred in an airy white truffle-foam risotto, and poached apricots added a delicious sweetness when laid atop silky, savory scallops. The food is both earthy and sophisticated, a combination that's echoed in the minimalist décor, both indoors and out.

*El Dorado Kitchen, 405 First St. W., Sonoma, (707) 996-3030, www.eldorado-sonoma.com. Lunch and dinner daily. Entrées: \$17–\$26.*

**La Salette, Sonoma** Wander off a main square in Lisbon and you're bound to come across a restaurant like La Salette, a spot prized for good food and a convivial atmosphere. At lunch one weekday, three local B&B owners bumped into one another and decided to share a table, as well as a bottle of wine, some gossip, and hearty plates of Portuguese cheeses, mussels, and clams. For day-trippers, a good lunchtime choice is the \$12 soup and salad combination, which might include a buttery fennel soup and a crisp Caesar salad topped with chicken grilled in spicy Portuguese *piri piri* sauce. The soup and salad are accompanied by a warm corn roll, spiced with cinnamon and cumin, made from chef Manuel Azevedo's mother's secret recipe. At dinner, try the *porco a Alentejana*, a classic pork stew, or *bacalhau*, a salt cod casserole. For dessert, there's sweet, dense fig cake surrounding hazelnut

ice cream, which redefines the ice cream sandwich.

*La Salette, 452 First St. E., Ste. H, Sonoma, (707) 938-1927, www.lasalette-restaurant.com. Tues.–Sun. 11:30 a.m.–9 p.m., crepes served Wed.–Sun. 8:30–11:30 a.m.*

## DRINK

### Sonoma Plaza Tasting Rooms, Sonoma

It used to be that when you wanted to taste wine at Castle Vineyards & Winery, you'd go check a sign in the driveway. If it said the winery was open, you could go hunker down in a nondescript building and taste some stunning Sirah, Pinot, or even Vignier. Now Castle Vineyards has opened a tasting room in a sweet little 1922 bungalow on Sonoma Plaza that once belonged to the famous wine-making Sebastianis. Here, you can sip wine in the shady front garden.

The tasting room for Charles Creek Vineyards is located in an 1890s storefront, and a life-size statue of a cow made of wine corks reflects founders Bill and Gerry Brinton's down-home approach to winemaking. Their traditional midwestern values shine through in their wines, which by most accounts could be sold for \$30 to \$75, but are offered in the \$20 to \$30 price range. Tasting room manager Alan Wastell will pour you a rich and spicy 2002 Miradero Merlot, and make a good case for why Merlot should be hip again, *Sideways* notwithstanding.

Enjoy a two-for-one experience in the tasting room for the Mayo Family Winery, housed in a historic storefront on the plaza's southwest corner. The tasting room shares a space with the Corner Store, a purveyor of colorful crockery, linens, and other items for your home. Let your eyes wander over the latest kitchen table tchotchkes while you nibble on a Spanish cheese and taste Mayo's oaky 2002 Chardonnay or the "party in a glass" 2003 Libertine, an interesting red blend.

*Castle Vineyards & Winery, 122 W. Spain St., (707) 996-1966, www.castlevineyards.com; daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Charles Creek Vineyards, 483 First St. W., (707) 935-3848, www.charlescreek.com; daily 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Mayo Family Winery, 498 First St. E., (707) 996-9911, www.mayofamilywinery.com; Mon.–Sat. 10:30 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun. 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.*

## SHOP

**Artefact, Sonoma** If you're a scavenger at heart, especially one with high-end taste, Artefact Design and Salvage is a good place to stop on your way in to or out of Sonoma. It's one of the home and garden shops housed in the Cornerstone Festival of Gardens, a nine-acre outdoor museum displaying cutting-edge landscape design. Shop for unusual antiques, architectural elements, and design pieces to jazz up your home or backyard. You'll find such goodies as early 20th-century urns, a pair of 1907 street lamps, 19th-century wrought-iron gates, and gothic-looking pediments rescued from old Manhattan buildings. A 10-foot-diameter cast-iron turn-of-the-20th-century clock face found in a Pennsylvania town (which goes for a mere \$15,400) could serve as an unusual wall hanging in a grand entryway or as a detail embedded into a floor or table. Artefact also sells new home accessories made by local artists.

*Artefact Design & Salvage, Cornerstone Festival of Gardens, 23570 Hwy. 121, Sonoma, (707) 933-0660, www.artefact-designsalvage.com. Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.*

## PLAY

### Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Sonoma

Think of a boutique, Wine Country version of SFMOMA. The Sonoma Valley Museum of Art is an oasis of Mario Botta-esque modernism just south of the town's historic plaza. In

