

SABLE RIDGE

VINEYARDS

BENNETT VALLEY: A UNIQUE HOME FOR SABLE RIDGE VINEYARDS

Bennett Valley, home for Sable Ridge Vineyards, as well as other notable wineries and vineyards, has begun to take on an identity and reputation of its own among those who follow the course of California's vineyard developments. That reputation will only grow in the coming years. Sable Ridge is one of the wineries that will play an important role in demonstrating the unique terroir and potential of the Bennett Valley region

A Valley Surrounded, but Accessible to Cooling Fog

Though part of the extensive Sonoma Valley appellation, Bennett Valley is a distinct valley separated from the northern Sonoma Valley by the Bennett Mountain range to the east. To the southwest sits the Sonoma Mountain sub-appellation, a viticulturally-established set of peaks and valleys that smooth and descend as they reach north and west. To the northwest lies Taylor Mountain and its set of foothills, an important avenue for evening fog. Finally, to the north of Bennett Valley is the Santa Rosa Plain, the opening that delivers the evening fog that gives the Valley its relatively cool climate.

Climatically, Bennett Valley experiences temperature highs that rival those recorded on the floor of Sonoma Valley. However, its summer lows match those of the cooler reaches of the Russian River Valley and the nearby Carneros appellation. Fog has a profound effect on Bennett Valley, entering from the north, creeping down the Santa Rosa plain, and entering through the mountain gap to Bennett Valley's west. Evening temperatures tend to plunge in the summer months once the sun descends. These are perfect grape growing conditions.

The Valley was originally devoted to dairies. Matanzas Creek Winery was the first to demonstrate the potential of this cool, narrow valley when it began growing grapes in the late 1970s. Today, cows continue to graze the oak-studded hillsides.

Bennett Valley has undergone a dramatic change of landscape. The valley floor is now dotted with vineyards mostly planted in the mid-1990s. The sloping hillsides bordering the floor have also seen extensive planting. Wineries both large and small have discovered this small and unique area. The latest plantings are testament to a history of growing high quality grapes. The area's renown will be extended and refined by these new, carefully tended vineyards.

The Future is in Syrah

Sable Ridge Vineyards was established in Bennett Valley in 1997 on an eight-acre parcel of land that now holds the winery facility and six acres of Syrah vines. With a cool climate and early morning fog in the summer, the Sable Ridge Syrah plantings enjoy a very long growing season. Harvest begins around the end of October. Sable Ridge is not the only Syrah grower in the area. Others have planted the Rhone varietal throughout Bennett Valley. Though no particular varietal has come to be associated with the area, there is an understanding that high quality Syrah will become identified with Bennett Valley. Sable Ridge Vineyards plans to be on the cutting edge of that trend.