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***FARM TO TABLE & SEA TO PLATTER***

***CULINARY CROP OF SPLENDOR DEFINES MONTEREY COUNTY***

**MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIF,** — From the verdant Salinas and Carmel Valleys to the watery refuge of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Monterey County offers everything from farm to table and sea to sustainable platter year round. The unparalleled culinary tradition sprouts from a perfect mix of climate and geology that combine to nurture produce of all kinds. With 40,000+ acres of vines and nine different American Viticultural Areas (AVA's) this region's bounty of harvest outpaces entire states with its abundance of unique offerings. These gifts and the picturesque backdrop of the crashing surf and white sand beaches lend itself to Monterey County creating the ultimate in California cuisine.

**"A" TABLE CHEFS**

Monterey County proudly proclaims some of the most celebrated chefs in the world. Of the hundreds of restaurants in Monterey County many have been honored with the food industry's highest awards, including DiRoNa (Distinguished Restaurants of North America) and *Wine Spectator's* awards for excellence.

Here you will find legendary culinary creators such as **Cal Stamenov and Mark Ayers** as well as **renowned restaurants such as Aubergine Restaurant, Sardine Factory, Anton & Michel, and Casanova**. These chefs not only participate in the Pebble Beach Food & Wine - an annual event that brings more than 60 legendary chefs from all over the world to the Monterey Peninsula, they also play a part in the **Monterey Bay Aquarium's annual sustainable seafood conference -- Cooking for Solutions** -- and forage the daily farmers markets and local fisheries. These chefs and others in Monterey County shine a light on what it means to be stewards of the land and sea by using fresh vegetables and sustainable seafood to create delicious delicacies such as Pisoni asparagus with a seared day boat scallop, black truffle vinaigrette and morel mushroom revealed that morning by a local fungi forager. [www.bernardus.com](http://www.bernardus.com); [www.pacificsedg.com](http://www.pacificsedg.com); [www.laubergecarmel.com](http://www.laubergecarmel.com); [www.antonandmichel.com](http://www.antonandmichel.com); [www.casanovarestaurant.com](http://www.casanovarestaurant.com); [www.montereybayaquarium.org](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org)

**TWICE ON SUNDAYS**

Foodies can literally find a **Farmers Market** every single day of the week, and often twice on Sundays! A visit here delivers the heartbeat of the region, with farmers proudly displaying local artichokes, broccoli, herbs, micro-greens and an abundance of sea life. The county has a number of regular farmer's markets in Old Monterey, Monterey Peninsula College, Salinas, Pacific Grove, Marina, Soledad and Carmel. **Visitors can purchase fruits and vegetables straight from the folks who grow them.** Many of the outdoor markets also feature booths selling freshly prepared seafood, barbecue and foods from around the world. [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com)

## GREEN IS GOOD

Monterey County, and in particular the Salinas Valley, is perhaps known best as the "Salad Bowl of the World." The county is one of the nation's leading agricultural producers, and the third largest agricultural economy in California. **A temperate climate, rich soils and unparalleled infrastructure** make the both Salinas and Carmel Valley an ideal place to grow cool-season vegetables like artichokes, raspberries, strawberries and flowers in every color and variety of the rainbow. Take an agricultural tour, wine trek or visit the nation's first (and largest) working organic farm – **Earthbound Farms**. Monterey County also commands nearly 90 percent of the packaged salad and pre-cut fresh vegetable market. In short, agriculture is big business here. **The Farm** also offers a child-proof working farm providing insight into the daily drill that delivers America's freshest produce. Grab a fork and go! [www.agventuretours.com](http://www.agventuretours.com); [www.thefarm-salinasvalley.com](http://www.thefarm-salinasvalley.com); [www.ebfarm.com](http://www.ebfarm.com).

## INK THE DEAL

Since the arrival of Portuguese fishermen, local squid has been a mainstay in the waters off Monterey Bay. On a busy night, dozens of fishing boats can be spotted on the bay, trolling for these giant cephalopods. Much of the local catch goes to Japan and some is jet-set to San Francisco, but a large portion of the catch stays right here in Monterey, heading to local restaurants to be used **in fried calamari and squid salads**. Local chefs are trained and skilled in the proper preparation, to bring out the subtle tastes - the squid is tender yet firm—a pure white patty with a simple flavor. Perhaps no fish is more representative of Monterey Bay and can be enjoyed year round.

Farm-raised California Red Abalone is also sustainably raised by **Monterey Abalone Company** at the tip of Commercial Wharf #2. Here, visitors can purchase and take home fresh abalone in a hermetically sealed pack or dive into any local restaurant from the **Sardine Factory to seasonal "Super Abs" tasting menu at The Highland's Inn**. The U.S. market is primarily in California; hence travelers rarely find this delicacy elsewhere. Abalone is so succulent that a seared filet over cauliflower puree with lobster butter simply melts in the mouth. Paired with a delicious **Robert Talbot Vineyard's Chardonnay or Benardus Winery Sauvignon Blanc**, this combo, creates an explosion of decadence that is hard to replicate. [www.montereyabalone.com](http://www.montereyabalone.com); [www.talbottvineyards.com](http://www.talbottvineyards.com); [www.bernardus.com](http://www.bernardus.com)

## GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

Known for the rugged coastal beauty of Big Sur and the charm of Carmel, Monterey lies within the Central Coast AVA and is home to **nine distinct AVA's**, including top-ranked Santa Lucia Highlands, Arroyo Seco, Carmel Valley, Chalone, Hames Valley, Monterey, San Antonio Valley, San Bernabe and San Lucas. The deep, cold waters of Monterey Bay deliver morning fog and strong cooling afternoon winds, making Monterey County particularly well-suited to cool climate grapes like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Those interested in Bordeaux varieties like Cabernet and Merlot should visit Carmel Valley for a flight of outstanding varietals. A cache of certified **organic vineyards** also lay claim to this region including **Heller Estate Organic Vineyards, Morgan Winery and DeTierra Vineyards**.

Though local winegrowers have fostered extensive Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir programs, the region's diverse micro-climates and terroir allow growers and vintners to experiment with lesser-known varietals such as Syrah, Zinfandel and Pinot Grigio. "Here we have a great growing region, with a long cool growing season. With no real heat spikes in the summer, rain in the fall or frost in the winter, which creates the perfect climate for our temperate chardonnay and pinot noir," states Gary Francione from the Santa Lucia Highlands, "each varietal has different characteristics dependent on where it is grown, but the **consistency and quality of our grapes is what differentiates our wines.**" It is the unique combination of inventiveness, craftsmanship and scenery that makes Monterey County the ideal destination for the adventurous wine and food lover. There are more than 65 Monterey County wineries, over 35 of those have individual tasting rooms. [www.montereywines.org](http://www.montereywines.org) [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com)

#### **VISITOR INFO.**

Monterey County is located 120 miles/192 km south of San Francisco and 345 miles/552 km north of Los Angeles along the classic California corridor. The region boasts 99 miles of prime Pacific Coastline, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, three historic missions, 40,000 acres of premium vineyards, 24 golf courses and over 250 lodging properties. Monterey County includes the Monterey Peninsula, Big Sur, North County and the Salinas Valley. The Monterey Peninsula Airport (MRY), just three miles from historic downtown Monterey and minutes from the area's major attractions, is served by non-stop flights to and from Denver (DEN), Las Vegas (LAS), Phoenix (PHX), Los Angeles (LAX), San Diego (SAN) and San Francisco (SFO). [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com).

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