

Syrah, Viognier and Grenache — taste the grapes of France's Rhône Valley in Smokey vintages from Wine Country producers.

HOME FOR RHÔNE

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The easy generalization says it's perfection that Pinot Noir makers are seeking and prestige is the goal of Cabernet Sauvignon makers.

So if you're looking for something edgier, an outlier in the winemaking world, find the wines of the Rhône and follow the trail of someone making Cinsault or Roussanne, even Syrah.

When it comes to the wines made from grapes grown in France's Rhône Valley — Syrah, Viognier, Grenache and others — it takes a vintner with an artist's soul to get it right. These less predictable grapes are by nature more varied and yield styles of wine more open to interpretation. But their smoky richness is welcome on a winter's night.

Here are the ABC's of Rhône-style producers worth seeking out on both sides of the Mayacamas Mountains.

ANABA

Anaba is a new label inspired by the renowned white and red wines of France's Rhône Valley. In its first vintage, it has released a 2007 white Rhône blend called Coriol that's 69 percent Viognier, 15 percent Roussanne, 10 percent Marsanne and 6 percent Grenache Blanc. The vineyards involved are McWilliams, Landa and Kelly Glenn, all in Sonoma Valley. Landa is the main source for the floral-noted Viognier; the other vineyards provide the rest.

The result is a rich, bright wine with notes of peach, citrus and white pepper. Anaba's other wines include a 2006 red Rhône blend and a 2007 Viognier Landa Vineyard, a full-bodied Viognier with a rich texture and tropical fruit and citrus notes. A tasting room is currently being built at the intersection of Highways 121 and 116, set to open in early April. Until then, taste by appointment at the winery.