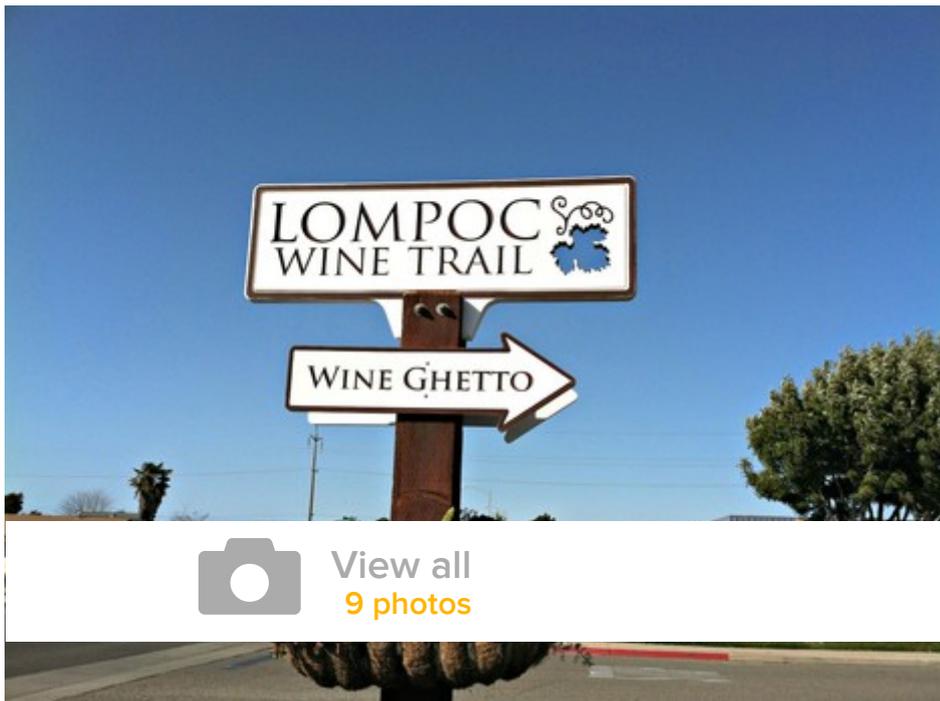


Lompoc Wine Ghetto Part 1

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Follow the signs to the Lompoc Wine Ghetto, home to fabulous Pinot Noir and other small-production wines.
Patricia Decker

Wine tasting in a ghetto? It doesn't sound like the normal grandeur that accompanies wine, but in this windswept corner of Santa Barbara County, the **Lompoc Wine Ghetto** has become a mecca for world-class, artisan wine production. Stripped down to the bare essentials, this industrial park maze, all asphalt and aluminum, spotlights the wine, in all of its intensity and raw charm, not adorned with wine country couture. Small lots of vibrant **Pinot Noir** that resonates fruit and savory notes and juicy **Chardonnay** that makes your mouth water for more are the highlights here.

Nineteen tasting rooms pour some of the best wines in Santa Barbara County. **Ampelos Cellars**, **Fiddlehead Cellars**, Flying Goat Cellars, Samsara Wines, Evening Land, **Jalama Wines**, Joseph Blair, Longoria, **Loring Wine Co.**, Moretti Wines, **Palmina**, Piedrassis New Vineland, Taste of the Sta. Rita Hills, and **Zotovich Cellars**, to name a few, call the Ghetto their home. Born out of economy, young winemakers without deep pockets could rent a space, buy grapes from local vineyards, and hand-craft



quality wines on site. For wine lovers, it's a treasure hunt. *Patricia Decker*

Park the car and wander among the tasting rooms, get the "skinny" on [Pinot Noir](#) clones, skin contact, and fermentation. Discover cool climate Syrah, faintly familiar yet very different from the heat-soaked grapes grown near Los Olivos. How about some Italian varietals such as Nebbiolo, Barbara, and Dolcetto? Tasting wine in this coastal gateway is an education, of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA and beyond.

You never know what you'll find in the Ghetto, one day winemaker Sashi Moorman is baking bread in the back room of his [Piedrassi/New Vineland](#) tasting room, fresh out of wine to sell, but crafting loaves of heirloom grain for local farmer's markets. All of the wineries offer something special to the intrepid traveler, and off the beaten path, these wines reward the effort, with their pretty palate of fruit, electric earth, and cool charm, their startling purity, and juicy body a reflection of the winemakers passion and the gifts that Mother Nature gives. Here are a few examples of what you'll find.

The [Taste of Sta. Rita Hills](#) tasting room is home to many small artisanal wine producers, some legendary such as Ken Brown and Sea Smoke, others little known such as [Dolina](#) and Kessler-Haak. The only requirement is that these wines must come from the Sta. Rita Hills to be poured here. Owner and gracious host [Antonio Moretti](#) welcomes all visitors with a daily list of hard to find wines crafted by small producers, paired with black truffle cheese, salamé, and bits of bread, all to bring out the best of these limited production wines. Here are a couple of highlights from a recent tasting. The stunning [2010 Ken Brown Clos Pepe Vineyard Pinot Noir](#) is intense, rich, and complex, wild blackberry, dark cherry, spice, a hint of mineral, and a long elegant finish. Wow, this wine is fabulous now but can age beautifully, if you can stop yourself from drinking it all now. The [2009 Kessler-Haak Syrah](#) is all cool climate, delicate, blackberry and boysenberry, white pepper, a whiff of violets, and good acidity, with a velvet body, it's a very different wine than full-on spicy Syrah that comes from the warmer regions of the Central Coast.

continued in [Part 2](#)



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