

[« Something to chew on... »](#) | [Main](#) | [View from a Taco Stand »](#)

## Chill in Mendocino: Organic Wines + The MacCallum House

By [Heather Irwin](#)

MENDOCINO: Fall is my favorite time to visit the coast--when you're forced to bundle up in woolly sweaters, knitted caps and fleece and huddle together for warmth against the cold, salty air. The threat of rain is a welcome excuse to snuggle under the covers for another few hours and wait out what inevitably turns out to be little more than a drizzle. Mustn't be too hasty about catching a chill out there, I say, throwing another log on the fire and turning back to my book.

So, it's always a little disappointing when Mendocino gets warm--downright balmy--even into October. When we went for a visit a few weeks ago, we packed sweaters and coats, even as our inland home was roasting into the 80s and 90s, hoping against hope to get a good whiff of fall nearer to the coast. Driving through the cool, evergreen stillness of the redwood groves just outside Philo, it felt like we'd fast forwarded well into November, at least.

Sweaters got stuffed into the trunk, however, as we sipped some of the organic wines of the county at the MacCallum House Bed and Breakfast. Sifting through a collection of organic and biodynamic winemakers including Parducci, Bonterra (an organic line of wines from Fetzer), as well as several of the Fetzer children who've now opened their own wineries (Patianna, Jeriko) all from the Hopland area; Graziano and Frey vineyards from the nearby (but still mostly unknown) Redwood Valley and Fife Winery from the Anderson Valley--we were impressed with the overall quality of the wines and commitment to growing grapes without synthetic pesticides and in a way that's harmonious with sustainability. The secret of organic growing, however, is that many wine growers in Northern California grow organically, or mostly organically (though often they aren't certified, because it requires several additional steps and costs to the grower)--they just aren't advertising the fact. In the past, organic winegrowers have faced an uphill battle with legitimacy, with detractors faulting their desire for "organics" over their ability to make good wine. Organic is nice, but so is a good bottle of wine--the trick is accomplishing both.

Afterward, sitting on the wide porch of the MacCallum House and drinking a glass of house red, all thoughts of organics, good wine, bad wine--well, most thoughts in general--melted away into a haze of "I'll think about that tomorrow."

Cozy sweaters came back out as the cool ocean air found its way toward our seats, the sun no longer bright enough to be much comfort.

The historic bed and breakfast in the heart of Mendocino changed ownership a few years ago, and is now owned by a local threesome--a couple and their high school friend, with both the inn and its landmark restaurant once again owned by one entity, rather than several. It seems to be a change that has agreed with both the town and its visitors--the inn busier than ever, bustling even on a Sunday night.

Sticking a toe out of our fluffy bed the next morning, then promptly pulling it back in, we decided to linger just a little longer at the Inn than we planned. It looked like rain, after all, and we weren't prepared to take that kind of a chance. At least not until after breakfast.

IF YOU GO: MacCallum House Restaurant will host the annual Wine and Mushroom Festival Dinner Nov. 10, featuring mushroom expert Eric Schramm and winemaker Greg Graziano.