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## 4 ways to wine in East Bay

California's newest wine country leaves the "country" behind



Who said you needed rolling vineyards to sell really great wine? Oakland's Cerruti Cellars is a warehouse turned wine house.

E. Spencer Toy



The warehouse-y back streets of Oakland and the East Bay have become havens for urban wine warriors who've realized they would rather make wine (and live) close to the crowds than pour every cent they have into a rolling piece of land.

Of course, wine isn't new to the city scene. Before the big shake in 1906, the largest winemaking region in Northern California was downtown San Francisco. Later, Richmond was a winemaking center. East Bay vintners are simply bringing the wine back—and for good reason. Their just-off-I-80 spots are cheap, if not exactly bucolic, and close to their customers.

Twenty-two wineries are strung through Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, and Alameda. A map at [eastbayvintners.com](http://eastbayvintners.com) (which you can also nab at the wineries) shows them all. But here are the ones we pull off for.

### 1. Dashe and JC Cellars

**Why we love them:** Some of the East Bay's best winemaking happens in this shared barrel room—JC for a splurge, Dashe a little more moderate.

**The backstory:** Jeff Cohn, former winemaker for Rosenblum Cellars, and Michael and Anne Dashe (who rented space from Rosenblum) man two ends of one tasting counter.

**Take it home:** Dashe's spicy 2008 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel (\$24; its Riesling rocks too—see "Wine in the West," page 116) and a half-gallon jug of JC's "Daily Ration" red blend (\$25). *Noon–6 Thu–Sun; tasting \$5; 55 Fourth St., Oakland; 510/452-1800; or [jccellars.com](http://jccellars.com); 510/465-5900.*

### 2. Periscope and Urbano Cellars

**Why we love them:** The anti-snob of tasting rooms, this onedoubles as an art gallery, yes, but in a warehouse, with Periscope and Urbano pouring next to each other, plus wine



After a few sips of JC's "Daily Ration" red blend that comes in a half-gallon jug, you'll forget why you ever bothered with those pesky corks.

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Take home a bottle of the Tudal Family 2007 Syrah (\$40), layered with blueberries, espresso, pepper, and earth from Cerruti Cellars.

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**The backstory:** After years in the Dry Creek Valley, Periscope's Brendan Eliason partnered with Urbano's Bob Rawson in 2006 to become wine-country refugee gara-gistes. (Urbano will move to Oakland's Jack London Square come the first of the year.)

**Take it home:** Periscope's nutty, chocolaty port-style "Fortified Dessert Wine" (\$18) made from Zinfandel and Petit Verdot, plus Urbano's juicy, plummy 2008 Mountain View Ranch Sangiovese (\$18). 1-6 Fri-Sun; free tasting; 1410 62nd St., Emeryville; [periscopecellars.com](http://periscopecellars.com) or 510/655-7827; [urbanocellars.com](http://urbanocellars.com) or 415/515-1379.

### 3. Rock Wall Wine Company

**Why we love it:** Side-by-side plank-on-barrel bars mean one-stop sipping and shopping, with six wineries sharing a vast mothballed naval airplane hangar in Alameda.

**The backstory:** Shauna Rosenblum (daughter of Alameda wine pioneer Kent, formerly of Rosenblum Cellars) launched the company to share space and equipment with Blacksmith Cellars, Carica Wines, Ehrenberg Cellars, JRE (John Robert Eppler Wines), and R&B Cellars.

**Take it home:** It's gotta be a Zin; try Rock Wall's rich, very berried 2008 Reserve Sonoma Zinfandel from century-old vines (\$30). Noon-6 Thu-Sun; free tasting; 2301 Monarch St., Alameda; 510/522-5700.

### 4. Cerruti Cellars

**Why we love it:** Just across the tracks from Oakland's future public market at Jack London Square—in an area that's shaping up to be a hotbed of tasting rooms—the coolest warehouse/wine space going is set to open in fall 2010.

**The backstory:** Alameda native John Tudal, who used to haul his family's produce to market a stone's throw away, is returning to his roots by planting Cerruti Cellars here. Look for a lot of wine for very little money among the Cerruti labels (Tractor Shed Red, Honker Blanc), as well as elegant Tudal Family wines from Napa Valley.

**Take it home:** Tudal Family 2007 Syrah (\$40), layered with blueberries, espresso, pepper, and earth. Call for info; 100 Webster St., Oakland; 510/550-2900.

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**Sara Schneider** | *From the September 2010 Issue*

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