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# SIERRA ORO FARM TRAIL

## SECOND ANNUAL PASSPORT WEEKEND

BY MANDY JOHNSTON

In the early transition from summer to fall in the Sacramento Valley, that magical time when long sleeves may be required after nightfall and a crispness swirls in the lingering summer air, we “city dwellers” get a small sliver of the agricultural action: trailing behind harvesting equipment on the roadways, noticing a bit more dust in the air while the almonds and walnuts are being swept from their neat orchard piles, or even admiring the slight change in color the trees begin to reveal as they prepare for their fall and winter naps. And weekly, we’re allowed that small glimpse into our local farmers’ lives (and maybe trucks!) as we visit their farmers’ market booths, possibly stopping to chat a while about this year’s abundance and walk away with the week’s provisions.

But on the weekend of October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, we mere mortals will have the chance to look behind those green-turning-gold curtains at 20 of the North State’s farms and six surrounding wineries. And there’s no secret handshake required; no undisclosed knock or insider information needed. With specially issued passports in hand and perhaps a few trusty friends acting as navigators, we can chart our course through the abundance of agriculture the Sacramento Valley has to offer—tasting, talking, and sharing all the while.

This fall marks the second annual Passport Weekend hosted by the specialty farms, wineries, and lodging and restaurant partners of the Sierra Oro Farm Trail Map. Now in its second printing, the map has increased from 16 participants to 25— with new ones hopping on board even after these words hit the page! The farms are spread throughout the North Valley, ranging from the southern-most tip of Butte County, north to Vina, and even west to Glenn County.

Every member of the Sierra Oro Farm Trail Map will be open Saturday and Sunday, October 6 and 7 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and they’ll be offering you the inside scoop (quite literally), including tastings of their wares and tours of their facilities. To facilitate your excursion planning, you may want to purchase your passport early and chart your course beforehand—or at least take note of the places you and your traveling mates most want to visit.

But be forewarned: it’s no easy task! The farms and wineries each try to plan something special for the weekend, whether it’s live music, barrel tastings, harvest parties, or even grand openings. Many of the participating farms and wineries

will pair up with fellow local producers who are not on the list. Last year, for example, Canyon Creek Nurseries served Knudsen Juices, while Odyssey Vineyards hosted local cheese, bread, and pasta sauce producers.

Nicole Johansson, of Lodestar Olive Oil in Oroville, suggests getting a head start to ensure you’re able to take in all the region has to offer.

“Start early,” she says with a smile. “So many people last year wanted to see more and didn’t realize it would take so much time to get to the next place. They loved the places they were visiting and were having so much fun they didn’t have time to make it to the next farm or winery.”

To combat course-plotting confusion, the map committee took heed of advice from last year’s Passport Weekend and redesigned the maps by region to make navigation between stops easier. We “town folk” now will have a more accurate idea of the distance between, say, California Olive Ranch and New Clairvaux Winery and more detailed instructions on how to get there.

While the description of this weekend’s festivities may remind many of similar events in the Napa or Lake County areas, it’s safe to say that those celebrations may end up resembling mobile wine tastings; while the Sierra Oro Passport Weekend highlights so much more—from the unique array of Harvest Hill’s heirloom pumpkins to Massa’s organic rice (this is the perfect season to spot wetland wildlife!), from the scrumptious Pink Lady apples at Noble Orchards’ packing shed in Paradise to the brand-new eggmobile at Chaffin Orchards in Oroville. Did I mention the specially-themed menus offered by the map’s restaurant partners?

Passports are \$20 and will go on sale August 20<sup>th</sup> at any participating Farm Trail farm or winery, the Chico Chamber of Commerce, and any Tri Counties Branch in the greater Chico, Redding and Sacramento Areas. All proceeds go to benefit the Sierra Oro Farm Trail Association to further develop agri-tourism in the North State. Keep an eye on [www.sierraoro.org](http://www.sierraoro.org) for more information and for online ticket sales, or e-mail [farmer@lodestarfarms.com](mailto:farmer@lodestarfarms.com). With passport in hand and navigators at the ready, the Sierra Oro Farm Trail Map’s Passport Weekend is your backstage pass to the magic show whose “ta-da” is the agricultural abundance of the Sacramento Valley. Don’t be afraid to peek behind that curtain! ❧

## THE FARMS INCLUDE

Book Family Farm  
Butte View Olive Company  
California Harvest Shop  
California Olive Ranch  
Canyon Creek Nursery  
Chaffin Orchards  
Feather River Alpaca Farm  
Golden West Nuts  
Harvest Hill Heirloom Pumpkins  
Lodestar Farms  
Lundberg Rice  
Maisie Jane's Sunshine Products  
Massa Family Farm Organic Rice  
Mountain View Christmas Tree Farm  
Noble Orchards  
Ord Bend Pistachios  
Pedrozo Cheese  
Tri-L Mandarins  
Wagon Wheel Market



## THE SIX WINERIES ARE

Grey Fox Winery  
LaRocca Vineyards  
Long Creek Winery  
New Clairvaux Winery  
Odyssey Winery and Vineyards  
Quilici Vineyards

