



OREGON
WINE

Oregon Wine Backgrounder

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Facts

Since the first grapes were planted in the state 50 years ago, Oregon is now recognized as one of the world's elite winemaking regions. With 18 designated wine growing areas located in four diverse regions, Oregon boasts more than 676 wineries producing wine from dozens of grape varieties.

Oregon's wines have benefited from the state's varied but accommodating climate and unique terroirs. Most of its wineries are small and family owned, many producing fewer than 5,000 cases annually. They can be found sprinkled along country roads, tucked into mountain foothills, situated high above vineyards with breathtaking views of the landscape and now in downtown storefronts on historic main streets.

Oregon's 676 wineries are worth the pilgrimage.

All of this made wine touring one of Oregon's top draws. In 2013 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), wine-related tourism contributed an estimated \$207.5 million in revenues to the Oregon economy.



Oregon wines are available online, at restaurants and from fine wine stores throughout the U.S. and around the world, but there are many small-batch offerings only available at the wineries' tasting rooms.

Here is our story.

Place

All wines come from someplace, but the best wines can only come from an extraordinary place. Oregon is an extraordinary place for wine.

When Oregon's wine pioneers looked out across the state's varied landscape, they saw what others couldn't: a perfect place for wine.

They understood that Oregon's northerly latitude meant grapes would get extra growing season sunlight for long, even ripening, and that crisp, cool nights would help grapes retain their freshening acidity. Such a combination meant Oregon grapes would naturally achieve mature, balanced flavors and full varietal character. The resulting wines, they surmised, could be sustainably grown and made without dramatic manipulation to be naturally fresh, lively, and have true-to-the-fruit flavors.



They were right. Today, the suitability of Oregon for great wine is unquestioned. There's a home in Oregon for any wine grape, from Arneis to Zinfandel.

In the marine-influenced Willamette Valley, cool-adapted grapes such as Pinot noir, Pinot gris, Riesling and Chardonnay ripen to perfection, producing elegant wines with a global reputation. In the warm, high-elevation vineyards of Southern Oregon and the Walla Walla Valley, heat-loving varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, Syrah and Viognier are crafted into head-turning wines earning top scores from national critics. And in the Columbia Gorge and Eastern Oregon, varied microclimates allow winemakers and growers the luxury of working with the widest range of grape varieties of anywhere in the state.

If you were a wine grape, you'd want to be planted in Oregon.

People

It takes great people to make great wine.

In Oregon, it's all about the wine, not the image. Oregon's winemakers wear jeans, not chinos; boots, not boat shoes. They speak more of sustainable farming than creative branding, of biodynamics instead of market dynamics. They are an unpretentious and independent lot who are as committed to the pursuit of their entrepreneurial wine vision as they are to the collaborative protection and advancement of Oregon wine quality.

It's always been that way. Oregon's wine community was founded by free thinkers who stubbornly planted Pinot noir where accepted wisdom said the grape would not grow – because they were convinced they could make their greatest wines only in Oregon. They were right.

Since then, second-generation and new wave Oregon winemakers continue to build on that heritage. They established the toughest wine labeling laws in the nation and imported never-seen-in-the-US grape clones to ensure they could continue to craft the best possible wine quality. They still pioneer new wine grapes for North America, including Tempranillo, Albariño, Grüner Veltliner, Lagrein and Vermentino. And they have established Oregon as a leader in sustainability, setting new standards for organic, biodynamic, and eco-sound vineyard and winery practices.

Above all, they maintain the primacy of quality: lower yields in favor of quality are embraced; excess fruit is stripped from the vine so what remains will ripen better; just-picked grapes are inspected to eliminate substandard fruit; native yeast fermentation helps keep the character of the *terroir*. Nothing is spared to create quality wines; Oregon's vines are hand-tended, the wines hand-crafted.

Eccentric? Perhaps. Uncompromising? Definitely. Oregon? Absolutely.



Jason Lett, second-generation winemaker, The Eyrie Vineyards

Product

Authentic wines honestly made – that’s what you find in Oregon.

Oregon wines taste of the land. The French call it *terroir*. We call it delicious.

A Pinot noir from the Dundee Hills has lean ripe cherry and strawberry notes, reflecting the iron-rich redness of its volcanic soil. A sophisticated Syrah from the Walla Walla Valley shows swaths of minerals and herbs, reminiscent of the cobblestone ground where the vines grow. A suave Viognier offers creamy touches of apricot and honey, conjuring images of summer sun and wildflowers in Southern Oregon vineyards.



Oregon wines taste this way on purpose. A key Oregon principle is to match the grape variety to the place where it will grow best, not just where it is able to grow. That’s why Willamette Valley Pinot noir is so wonderful: a cooler climate is best for that grape; and why Tempranillo from the Umpqua Valley is so full of character: that variety prefers warmer temperatures.

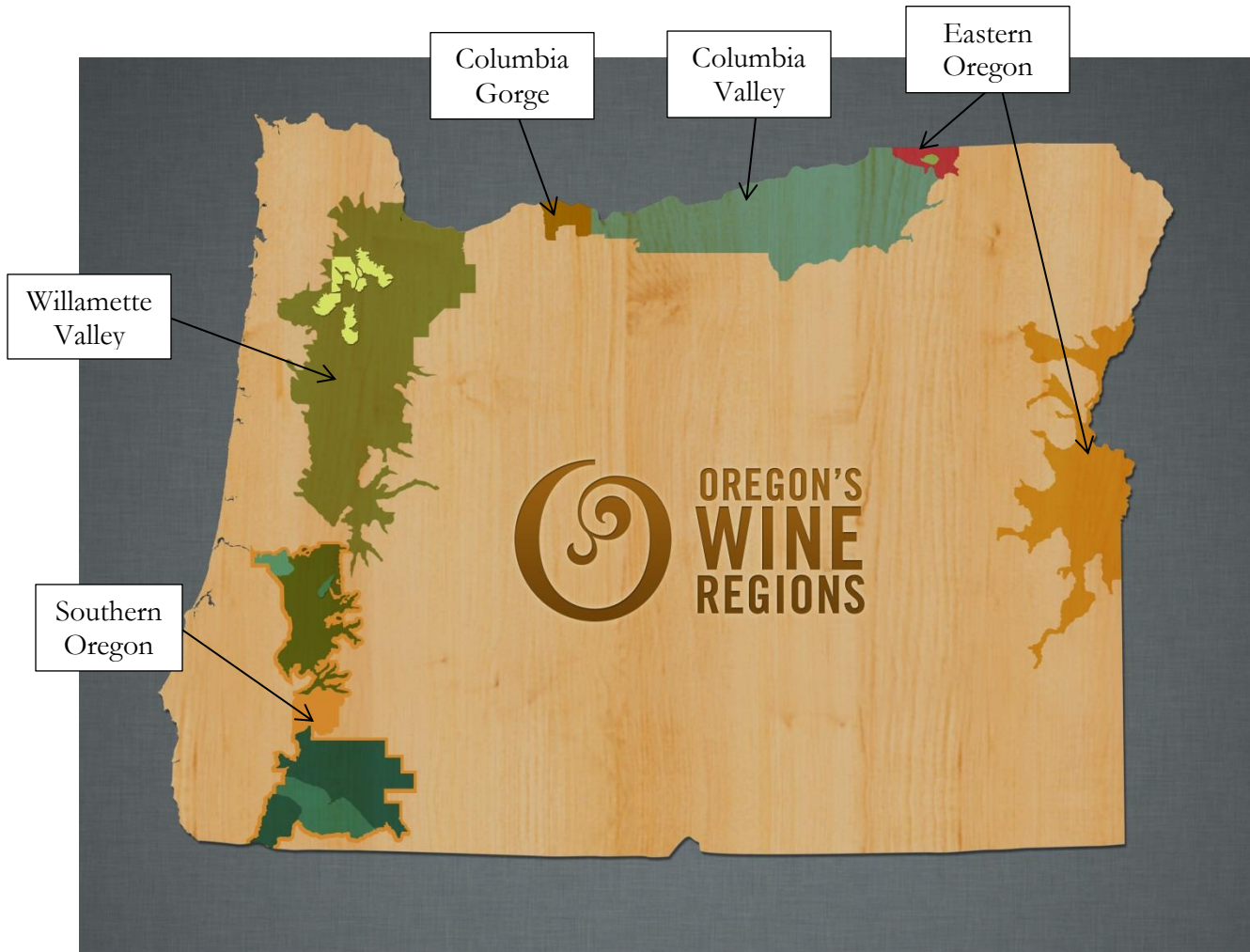
Oregon winemakers also know that to get the best from the grape, they must get out of Nature’s way. The majority of Oregon’s vineyards are organic, many are biodynamic, and the prevailing winemaking philosophy is “nonintervention,” meaning do as little as possible to manipulate the wine – let nature do it naturally.

The result is wines that have a genuine freshness, balanced fruit, and true varietal flavor: wines that taste of the place they were grown. And in a place as pristine, natural and diverse as Oregon, you might expect our wines would show the same qualities. You’d be right.

From sprightly sparklers and jaunty rosés, to minerally Rieslings and peachy Viogniers; from elegant Pinot noirs and sumptuous Syrahs, to classy Cabernets and dulcet dessert wines, Oregon’s wine variety will satisfy anyone’s palate.

Wine Regions

Oregon's wine-producing regions are unique in geography, climate, varietals and winemaking styles.

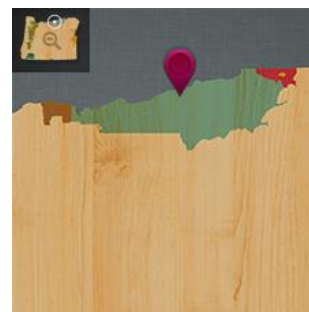


Resources:
All Oregon AVAs
<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/>



Columbia Gorge and Columbia Valley

Mt. Hood and the cliffs of the Columbia River look down on waterfront towns, countless waterfalls and the world's best windsurfing waters. This brewpub mecca and up-and-coming wine region is also the home of the Hood River Fruit Loop driving trail.



Located in the Hood River area, the Columbia Gorge AVA's climate varies widely. From the high desert-like east to the cooler, wetter west, a range of grape varieties – Chardonnay, Pinot noir, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, among them – thrive in this region.

While much of the arid Columbia Valley AVA is located on the Washington side of the Columbia River, a number of new, innovative Oregon wineries are making Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and a host of other wines in The Dalles area.

Resources:

Quennet Winery Tasting Room in the Historic Sunshine Mill, The Dalles, Ore.

Columbia Gorge Winegrowers
<http://columbiagorgewine.com/>

Hood River Chamber of Commerce
<http://hoodriver.org/>

Oregon Wine Board / Columbia Gorge
<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/columbia-gorge/>

Oregon Wine Board / Columbia Valley
<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/columbia-valley/>

Travel Oregon / Mt. Hood / Columbia River Gorge
<http://traveloregon.com/cities-regions/mt-hood-the-gorge/>



Hood River Bridge on the Columbia River

Southern Oregon

With orchards and vineyards set against alpine meadows, crystal-clear rivers and lush valleys, this rugged, diverse region is home to Crater Lake National Park.



Oregon winemaking originated here when the first wine grapes were planted in the 1800s. Today, new vineyards and wineries are reigniting the established wine culture by producing top-notch wines. Comprised of 170 microclimates, Southern Oregon is the state's largest warm-climate growing region.

With five Sub AVAs – Umpqua Valley, Red Hills Douglas County, Rogue Valley, Applegate Valley and Elkton – in addition to the Southern Oregon AVA, and more than 65 wineries, it's one of the most diverse winegrowing regions in the world. Cooler areas produce Pinot noir, Pinot gris, Sauvignon blanc and more. The warmer, arid regions ripen Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, Syrah and others.



Folin Cellars, Gold Hill, Ore.



Crater Lake National Park

Resources:

Southern Oregon Winery Association
<http://sorwa.org/>

Southern Oregon Visitors Association
<http://southernoregon.org/>

Oregon Wine Board / Southern Oregon
<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/southern-oregon/>

Travel Oregon / Southern Oregon
<http://traveloregon.com/cities-regions/southern-oregon/>

Eastern Oregon



The spirit of the West is alive and well in Eastern Oregon, where visitors can take in rodeos, fishing, hunting, snow sports and incredible wildlife viewing. Orchards, wheat fields and vineyards dot the countryside graced by the Blue Mountains on the horizon.

Located in northeastern Oregon eight miles south of Walla Walla, Wash., this region is open, spacious and home to vineyards along the Columbia River. Diverse soils form the basis of distinctive terroirs of Walla Walla AVA and Oregon's newest AVA The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater: silty, sandy earth from the Missoula Floods, basalt cobbles and fractured basalt bedrock.

Earthy and spicy, full-bodied Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Semillon, Pinot gris, Chenin blanc and Syrah produced here are easily recognized for their distinctive minerality.

Roughly 50% of Walla Walla AVA wine is made from grapes grown in Oregon.

The Snake River Valley AVA straddles the Oregon-Idaho border and is one of the state's newest. Currently, there are no wineries in the Oregon portion of the AVA.

Resources:

Milton-Freewater Travel

<http://miltonfreewatertravel.wordpress.com/>

Oregon Wine Board / Walla Walla Valley

<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/walla-walla-valley/>

Oregon Wine Board / The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater

<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/the-rocks-district-of-milton-freewater/>

Travel Oregon / Eastern Oregon

<http://traveloregon.com/cities-regions/eastern-oregon/>



Zerba Cellars, Milton-Freewater



Outside Milton-Freewater

Willamette Valley

With its namesake river running through it from Portland to south of Eugene, the region of more than



500 wineries is protected by the Coast Range to the west, the Cascades to the east and a chain of hills to the north. The Willamette Valley is the heart of Oregon's agricultural production with farms

growing everything from fruit and nuts to Christmas trees and flowers, and, of course, wine grapes.



King Estate Winery, Eugene

In addition to the Willamette Valley AVA, sub AVAs include Chehalem Mountains, Yamhill-Carlton District, Ribbon Ridge, Dundee Hills, McMinnville and Eola-Amity Hills.

Wet, cool winters and warm, dry summers make this an ideal climate for Pinot noir and other cool-climate grapes, including Pinot gris, Chardonnay and Riesling.

Resources:

Willamette Valley Visitors Association

<http://oregonwinecountry.org>

Willamette Valley Wineries

<http://willamettewines.com/>

Oregon Wine Board / Willamette Valley

<http://oregonwine.org/discover-oregon-wine/place/willamette-valley/>

Travel Oregon / Willamette Valley

<http://traveloregon.com/cities-regions/willamette-valley/>



Willamette River

Sustainability



When Oregon's pioneering winegrowers envisioned planting grapes, they were driven by a passion for making world class wines. But, they also insisted that their pursuit of great wine be in harmony with the land, that it respect the environment and that it reflect the earth in which the grapes would grow.

As one of the diminishing, but still largely unspoiled places on earth, Oregon represented not just an ideal place for winegrowing, it represented a frontier where winegrowers could practice their trade in a biologically diverse and ecologically balanced way. They would produce the highest quality wine possible, but they would do it in synergy with

nature while upholding their responsibility as stewards of the land.

Oregonians have a long, rich and pacesetting legacy of preserving the state's pristine ecology. It's not uncommon for Oregon's environmental innovations to be preceded by "first in the nation" superlatives.

Much like the state where they chose to build a new industry a half century ago, Oregon's wine pioneers came to Oregon to plant vineyards and make wine, but also to embrace this rich environmental heritage. In so doing, they have written their own chapter in preserving and extending this heritage with their own innovations and practices.

Though it has grown into a major statewide industry, Oregon winemaking has much more often been a true labor of love for those who have chosen to brave hardships to go where others insisted they couldn't. And, they've done it with the kind of continual care and thoughtfulness rarely seen in the for-profit business world.

Oregon established its commitment to sustainable farming practices more than 100 years ago when the state legislature enacted the state's first environmental law, prohibiting pollution of waters used for domestic or livestock purposes. In 1967 Gov. Tom McCall signed the Beach Bill, calling it "one of the most far reaching measures of its kind enacted by any legislative body in the nation." The bill granted the public recreational rights to the dry sands of Oregon's beaches all the way to the vegetation line. In 1971, Oregon passed the nation's first Bottle Bill, requiring deposits on soft drink containers.

Signed into law in May 1973, Oregon Senate Bill 100 created an institutional structure for statewide planning. It required cities and counties to adopt comprehensive land-use plans and placed restrictions on the urban sprawl into farmland. Many of today's prime vineyards are located on hillsides not originally considered prime farmland. The wine industry played a major role in preserving these properties for the future development of some of today's grand cru vineyards and kept them from being zoned for residential housing and commercial development.

The commitment of early, Oregon wine growers and producers is not coincidental to the overall environmental movement in the state happening at the same time. Oregon attracted people who wanted to live in a place that reflected their values as stewards of the land.

Oregon wine producers are driven by their desire to have their wine reflect a sense of place. This inherently requires that they be able to grow their grapes sustainably - which is the key ingredient in making sure the wine that expresses the place in which the grapes are grown. Winemaking in Oregon is much about capturing the essence of the beauty and elegance of the state in a glass of wine.

Today, Oregon boasts the greatest commitment to sustainable farming of any wine region in the U.S. Roughly 45% of Oregon's vineyards are farmed in a sustainable manner as certified by one of several independent organizations. This compares to only 12% of vineyards in California. Washington's wine industry doesn't track sustainably farmed acreage.

Oregon's wine industry inherited a relatively intact ecosystem when it began in the 1960s and has worked hard to maintain this high level of pristineness. Members of the industry were instrumental in the creating the Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE) certification. Today, LIVE is the leader in certifying not only vineyards, but wineries as well.

Oregon's commitment to sustainable winegrowing is also a key factor in decisions on where to invest research funds. Many of those decisions have either led directly to alternative farming practices or have led to innovation in vineyard management techniques.

Oregon's grape and wine research efforts focus on three areas that further sustainable farming and winemaking:

- Minimizing inputs into a farming operation and making the inputs used the most efficient and environmentally neutral possible.
- Minimizing outputs such as carbon, soil compaction and ecological disturbance.
- Maintaining an economically stable operation.

In addition, the industry maintains a continual focus on developing sustainability standards and practices in wine production, such as reducing the weight of wine packaging, reducing energy and water consumption, adopting new forms of alternative energy and building winemaking and storage facilities that meet and exceed carbon neutral standards.

Food and Wine

What grows together goes together.

Oregon wines are made for the table.

Before Oregon became famous as a foodie haven, Oregon winemakers were creating food-friendly wines. Because of the natural refreshing fruit flavors inherent in Oregon wines, they make easy and memorable matches for a wide variety of ingredients and cooking styles.

Matching food and wine: At its best, Oregon wine is paired with the season's freshest ingredients grown from nearby farms or drawn from Oregon's rivers and coast.

The subtle earthiness of a Willamette Valley Pinot noir is perfectly matched with fresh-picked wild mushrooms from the forest, while the wine's dry fruit flavor wonderfully complements the richness of wild-caught Pacific salmon. The notes of spice and fruit in a brisk Pinot gris pair well with native hazelnuts and farm-fresh cheeses. Steely dry Riesling and crisp Chardonnay easily enhance oysters from the coast or free-range heritage turkey.

A hearty Umpqua Valley Tempranillo seems made-to-order for a roast of hormone-free Oregon lamb, while a silky Syrah from the Walla Walla Valley has a delicious affinity for elk loin and other game meats. The soft succulence of a Columbia Gorge late harvest Viognier marries with a dessert of Hood River apples, while a compote of Southern Oregon peaches is a wonderful foil to a zesty blanc de blancs.

Whatever your palate preference, there's an Oregon wine to make the perfect pairing.



About the Oregon Wine Board

The Oregon Wine Board is a semi-independent Oregon state agency managing marketing, research and education initiatives that support and advance the Oregon wine and wine grape industry. The Board works on behalf of all Oregon wineries and independent growers throughout the state's diverse winegrowing regions. The Oregon wine grape and wine industry contributes more than \$3.35 billion in economic activity to the state economy each year, including more than 17,000 wine-related jobs and \$527 million in wages. <http://oregonwine.org/>

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