



California and
the Pacific Northwest
Comprehensive

DAY TWO:
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The following content was compiled for the Culinary Institute of America's Continuing Education Department by Liza Zimmerman, Adjunct Instructor with The CIA's Rudd Center for Professional Wine Studies.

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Liza B. Zimmerman, DWS

The Culinary Institute of America®

**Please Note: First part of course and
five pages dedicated to California**

THE WINES OF OREGON

BACKGROUND

Almost half of the state of Oregon is covered with forests. The eastern section of the state is semi-arid; the west is extremely wet. Oregon has 11 national wildlife refuge areas, and is home to deer, elk, and antelope. It is home to one of the world's deepest and most beautiful lakes, Crater Lake, a 1,943-foot deep lake created when Mt. Mazama collapsed almost 8,000 years ago; Mount Hood in the Cascade Range is a nationally recognized landmark. Portland is the state's largest city. Oregon's main agricultural zone is the Willamette Valley, a noted wine region recognized as a top producer of Pinot Noir. Oregon nuts and berries are some of the finest in the nation.

OREGON HISTORY

Among the early founders of the state's wine industry was Henderson Luelling, a noted horticulturist who crossed the Oregon Trail from the East with his wife and eight children. By 1947 he had planted grapes in the Willamette Valley. In the 1850s Peter Britt, whose name is now well known because of a popular music festival held at his former home, also grew grapes at his Valley View Vineyard.

An 1860 census reveals that Oregon's wine production was some 2,600 gallons, not all of it vitis vinifera (the species of vine from which most of the world's wine is made). A post-Prohibition boom saw 28 wineries making a million gallons of wine by 1938.

In contrast to Washington, where most vines are planted in the rain, shadows, and semi-desert east of the Cascade Mountains, most Oregon vines are directly exposed to the marine airflow of the Pacific Ocean. This makes for milder winters, but cooler and wetter summers. The state is notoriously wet, but most of the rain falls between October and April and not during harvest.

The Oregon wine industry almost shut down in 1919 because of the temperance movement and the fact that it couldn't compete with the California wine industry – both its scale and the fact that grapes ripened more easily in California.

Fruit vines dominated production in post-Prohibition Oregon. The state's modern era dates roughly from 1961, when Richard Sommer established Hill Crest Vineyard near Roseburg, in what's now the southern Umpqua appellation. He had come from the University of California at Davis and planted mostly Riesling, despite being told that vitifera grapes wouldn't grow in Oregon.

The truly modern Pinot Noir era dates to 1965, when David Lett of Eyrie Vineyard planted Pinot Noir cuttings near Corvallis and later in the Willamette Valley in the Dundee Hills, which is now the epicenter of Oregon wine industry. To this day he is still called "Papa Pinot" in tribute to bringing Pinot Noir to the state. He applied the principles of ripening date classification, developed in the 1880s in France, which contrasted with Amerine and Winkler's degree-day theory, which is still widely used in California.

Lett's first wines were so pale he called them "Spring Wine," rather than Pinot Noir, and had difficulties selling them. To this day his production facility is a windowless turkey processing plant

at the edge of McMinnville. He had commissioned a modern winery in 1969, and designs for it still hang on his wall as testament to the unwillingness of Oregon banks to support the fledging wine industry in the late 1960s.

California refugee Charles Coury also planted a wide range of grape varieties from Alsace in Oregon in the 1960s. Other pioneers include Dick Erath of Erath, who planted vines in 1969; Dick and Nancy Ponzi of Ponzi in 1970; Susan and Bill Sokol-Blosser in 1971; and David and Ginny Adelsheim in 1972. Many of the state's founding producers also planted Pinot Gris and Chardonnay.

OREGON STATISTICS

The state has 15 AVAs (American viticultural areas) and more than 300 wineries which produce wines from 72 grape varieties (as of 2005). Approximately 15 grapes are a primary focus and make up the bulk of Oregon's acreage. The top five grapes are Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling, and Merlot, according to the Oregon Wine Board.

2006 was a record crush year for the state. Increased production is attributed to higher yields and new acreage, according to the 2006 Oregon Vineyard and Winery Report. On a state level, growers haven't seen yields that high since 1997. Oregon grape growers planted a record-breaking 1,378 new acres in 2006; the next largest reported planting was in 1998.

Despite low inventory, Oregon wineries were also able to increase case sales by 2 percent over 2005.

Most wineries are producing on average 5,000 cases a year. The state cultivates a rustic, laid-back attitude, even though heavy hitters like wine critic Robert Parker are invested in properties like Beaux Frères. As result of small production, price points on Pinot Noirs can run high and several savvy wineries have launched more affordable second labels, like Big Fire and A to Z.

KEY OREGON PERSONALITIES

While David Lett was the first to plant Pinot Noir in Oregon, a few others weren't far behind. Dick Ponzi left a solid career in mechanical and aeronautical engineering—he designed rockets and jet fighters—to grow grapes in Oregon when there were only four wineries in the state. In 1969 he and his wife Nancy planted their first vines an hour's drive from Portland. Being the child of Italian immigrants, Ponzi had learned the basics of winemaking as a child and served as the winery's winemaker until his daughter Luisa took over in 1993, after studying in Burgundy. A Burgundian influence has since been felt on the wines.

It was David Lett's 1975 Eyrie Vineyards South Block Reserve Pinot Noir that really put Oregon on the wine map. In a ranking of the wines from more than 300 countries, Lett's Pinot Noir placed among the top ten.

The négociant Robert Drouhin staged a follow up in 1980, and Eyrie came second behind the Drouhin 1959 Chambolle-Musigny. This inspired Drouhin to purchase land in Oregon 1987 and build a state of the art, gravity-flow winery in the Dundee Hills in 1989. Gravity-feed cellars have become popular in the area and Adelsheim, Archery Summit, WillKenzie Estate, and Domaine Serene all have them. Domaine Serene's is five stories high and was completed in 2001. This is an

extra step these wineries have taken to ensure careful treatment of their precious Pinot Noir, which is a delicate grape with a thinner skin.

Hilda and Earl Jones of Abacela are often considered the top producers in southern Oregon, where they produce outstanding Tempranillo in their winery outside of Roseburg in the Umpqua Valley. They spent time in Spain's Rioja and Ribera del Duero learning about the grape, and looked for vineyard land in New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Washington before settling in Oregon.

THE OREGON AVAS

Willamette Valley

- Two hundred wineries and 10,000 acres of wine grapes
- Became an AVA in 1984
- Main grapes: Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot, Müller-Thurgau, Gewürztraminer, and Viognier

The Willamette Valley is 150 miles long and up to 60 miles wide, making it Oregon's largest AVA; it has the largest concentration of wineries and vineyards in Oregon. It runs from Portland to Eugene on either side of the Willamette River, and is nestled between the Coast and Cascade Mountain Ranges, about 60 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. It has six sub-AVAs: Chehalem Mountains, Dundee Hills, Eola-Amity Hills, McMinnville, Ribbon Ridge, and the Yamhill-Carlton District. The area is best known for Pinot Noir, but also produces good Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, and Pinot Blanc.

The Willamette Valley contains a significant number of mountains and hills: Chehalem Mountains, the Red Hills of Dundee, Eola Hills, Amity Hills and South Salem Hills. Most vineyards are planted on south-facing slopes to west of the Willamette River. The valley is an old volcano and sedimentary seabed that has been overlaid with gravel, silt, rock, and boulders. The most common of the volcanic type is red Jory soil which provides excellent drainage.

The area has a strong maritime influence. It is protected from the Coast Range in the west, Cascades to the east, and a series of hill chains to the north. Summer temperatures are moderate, rarely going above 90 degrees, and temperatures fall significantly in the evening. The entire region is classified as region one by Amerine and Winkler (which classifies wine regions by heat summation, expressed in degree days); California is divided into regions one to five (the hottest).

This region also produces hazelnuts, walnuts, fruits, and berries. Pinot Noir is the most widely planted variety. Chardonnay is also important, as is Pinot Gris.

SUB AVAS OF THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Chehalem Mountains

- The newest AVA, approved in fall 2006
- Twenty miles long and five miles wide
- One hundred vineyards, 31 wineries, and 600 vineyard acres

Winegrowing here dates back to 1968 when University of California graduate Dick Erath purchased land. By the 1970s there were other producers like the Adelsheims and the Ponzis. This area has the

greatest temperature variation in Willamette Valley. The soil is a combination of Columbia River basalt, ocean sedimentation, and wind-blown loess.

Dundee Hills

- Became an appellation in 2005
- Also known as the Red Hills of Dundee
- Fifty vineyards, 25 wineries and 1,700 vineyard acres
- Great views from Mt. Hood and Mt. Jefferson
- Oregon pioneer David Lett first planted Pinot Noir here
- Because of slope and elevation, the Dundee Hills vineyards benefit from warmer nights and less frost and fog than the valley floor

Volcanic Jory soil predominates in the Dundee Hills, and the name of the hills reflects the high iron content of the soil. In general soils are silty clay loam over a basaltic-volcanic rock base. Vines on Jory soil keep their vegetation longer and have delayed fruit ripening.

Eola-Amity Hills

- Became an appellation in 2006
- Thirty wineries and 1,460 vineyard acres
- Agricultural history of this area dates back to the 1850s, although it wasn't until the 1970s that winemakers started to grow grapes here
- The area has a temperate climate with 40 inches of rain annually, mostly outside the growing season

The Eola Hills are a cluster of hills that are the triumvirate of prime vineyard sites in the Willamette Valley, along with Chehalem Mountains and the Red Hills of Dundee. Nekia soil prevails here, a volcanic, sandy clay loam similar to Jory. Fruit on this soil tends to ripen a little earlier than fruit in the Dundee Hills, creating grapes with greater acidity and more color. The first vineyards were planted here in the 1970s. Cristom has its winery here; the winery's original, and still current, winemaker, Steve Doerner, is a seasoned Pinot Noir producer from California. The region has close ties to Yamill.

McMinnville

- Became an AVA in 2005
- Fourteen wineries and 600 vineyard acres
- Farming here dates back to the 1800s, when berries, fruit trees, and livestock were cultivated here. The area is about 40 miles southwest of Portland. In 1987, McMinnville held the first International Pinot Noir Conference (IPNC), now a wildly popular three-day event of tastings, tours, and seminars. Soils here are generally sedimentary loams and silts, and quite shallow.

Ribbon Ridge

- Became an appellation in 2005
- Five wineries, 20 vineyards and 500 acres of wine grapes

In 1980 Harry Peterson-Nedry became the first to plant wine grapes here, at his Ridgcrest Vineyards. Other vineyards soon followed.

Temperatures on the hills here are slightly warmer and drier than the growing conditions on the valley floors. Soils here are primarily sedimentary and moderately well drained.

Yamill-Carlton

- Became an AVA in 2006
- Twenty wineries, 60 vineyards, and 700 acres of grapes

Once known for fruit trees and livestock, the area has a pretty recent wine history. In 1977 Pat and Joe Cambell started Elk Cove Vineyards, which produced the first commercial wine in the area. This is a cool climate area whose signature grape is Pinot Noir.

The area is now the epicenter of the Oregon wine country. It has greatest concentration of wineries, and high-quality ones as well. The soils can vary greatly. Willakenzie soil (shallow clay loam over sedimentary rock) dominates the Chehalem Mountains. Willakenzie soils are a bit sandy and produce slightly earlier ripening fruit than other soils. Pinot Noirs produced on this soil have a strong earthy note, reminiscent of chocolate, and often flavors of anise and spice.

In southern reaches of Yamill, Yamhill soil predominates, a clay loam over cobbled basalt. Soils are a hot topic here and grapes grown in Yamill are the standard for the Valley: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and small amounts of Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Gamay Noir, and Müller-Thurgau. At Erath, a bit of Arneis and Dolcetto can be found.

Umpqua Valley

- Became an AVA 1984
- Twelve wineries, 60 vineyards, and 1,200 vineyard acres

The state's second AVA, located southwest of Eugene. It is 65 miles from north to south and 25 from east to west.

The appellation follows the river of the same name over a series of low-lying hills. Winemaking in this appellation dates back to the German immigrants who lived in the area in the 1880s.

The Umpqua River weaves through the region, which allows cool Marine air to reduce temperatures drastically. Day temperatures are hotter here than in the Willamette Valley, but not as hot as parts of California. Daytime heat and the length of the growing season means that varieties that can't grow in the Willamette Valley can do well here.

The region features a cluster of small hillsides historically known as the hundred valleys of the Umpqua. The climate is very diverse; it is in the lower temperature range of region two. Bordeaux varieties do well, as do Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling. There have even been recent plantings of Tempranillo, Syrah, and Grenache.

Soils are mixed here, and 150 soil types have been found in the region. The valley floor has mostly alluvial or heavy clay, and hillsides and bench locations have mixed alluvial, silt, or clay. The area is defined by the collision of three mountain ranges here: the Klamath Mountains, the Coast Range, and the Cascades.

Grape varieties range from Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Semillon, and Sauvignon Blanc to Riesling and Gewürztraminer. Other plantings of Syrah, Grenache, Dolcetto, and Malbec can be found here as well, but it is Tempranillo that shows the most promise.

Sub-appellation of the Umpqua Valley: Red Hill Douglas County

- Became an AVA in 2005
- One vineyard and 220 acres planted

The Applegate and Scott families settled at the foot of Red Hill in the mid-1800s; the area's first vineyard was planted in 1876. The area has a mild climate with a maritime influence, so it can be wet as well. The area is dominated by iron-rich, red volcanic Jory soils.

Rogue Valley

- Became an AVA in 2001
- Sixteen wineries, 130 vineyards, and 2,200-plus vineyard acres

The Rogue Valley is the southernmost growing region in the state. The region, 60 miles long and 70 miles wide, forms a square at the southwest corner of Oregon, just north of California. The signature crop here used to be pears, and the area is known for skiing, white-water rafting, fishing, and hiking. It's made up of three adjacent river valleys (the Bear Creek, Applegate, and Illinois valleys), which are progressively warmer microclimates, so the region can grow both cool and warm-climate grape varieties. The area is rather remote, access is difficult, and drives are long, so the geography hinders marketing of the area.

Winemaking in the region dates back to the 1840s, when European immigrants began planting grapes and making wine. Peter Britt opened the state's first official winery, Valley View Winery (it closed in 1907 though the name has been resurrected), here in 1873.

The area produces a wide range of wines over varied mesoclimates. To the west, the region is affected by mountain and ocean influences which make it ideal for cool-climate grapes like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Further east, in higher elevations that are the warmest and driest, warm-weather varieties like Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, and Tempranillo thrive. Soil types are many and varied, including mixes of sedimentary and volcanic derived soils ranging from sandy loam to hard clay.

Frost can be a major problem here, both at bud break in spring and in autumn near harvest. Bridgeview Vineyards, one of state's largest produces, is located here. The winery, completed in 1986, has an estate vineyard and buys grapes; it produces broad range of varieties and has positioned itself as an affordable off-premise brand.

Sub-appellation of the Rogue Valley: Applegate Valley

- Became an appellation in 2001
- Six wineries, 23 vineyards, and 235 vineyard acres

This area was part of the Rogue Valley until 2001. Winemaking here dates back to the 1850s, but it's hard for producers to market wine because there are few producers. The appellation runs along Applegate River from the California border heading north. It has a moderate climate with a warm,

dry growing season with hot days and cool nights for warm-climate varieties. Soils are typically granite and well-drained and deep. There are varied climatic conditions, but the region is generally classified as region two.

Grapes range from Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and Merlot to smaller quantities of Syrah, Cabernet Franc, and a tiny bit of Pinot Noir.

Columbia Gorge

- Became an AVA in 2004
- Twelve wineries (six in Oregon), 34 vineyards (20 in Oregon,) and 400-plus vineyard acres

The area sits at the heart of the Columbia River Gorge, the river corridor which straddles Oregon and Washington for 15 miles. Lewis and Clark made the area famous by passing through it on their way to the Pacific in 1802.

Grape growing here dates back to the 1880s. The climate is very varied. Soils here are generally silty loam.

Columbia Valley

- Became an AVA in 1984
- Fifty wineries and 29,000 vineyard acres

Most of this huge area and its six subappellations are in Washington. Winemaking dates back to the early 1990s, when Zinfandel vines were planted. The climate is a continental high desert climate, and the area only gets about six to eight inches of rainfall; irrigation is essential. Soils are mostly silt and wind-blown loess sediment.

Walla Walla Valley

- Became an AVA in 1984
- Seventy wineries (one in Oregon), 52 vineyards (31 in Oregon), and 1,200 vineyard acres (572 in Oregon)

As with the Columbia Valley, the bulk of this appellation is in Washington. Winemaking began in the 1850s, when Italian immigrants planted vineyards.

Many mesoclimates exist in the region. Wind is an issue here. Clay loam is the basis for most of the soil; there's also silt, loess, and cobbles. The Washington side of this appellation contains many top producers, such as Cayuse, Leonetti, Pepper Bridge, and Seven Hills.

Southern Oregon AVA: includes the Umpqua, Rogue, and Applegate Valley Appellations

- Became an AVA in 2004
- Seventeen wineries, 120 vineyards, and 3,000 acres of wine grapes

The area runs 125 miles from Eugene south to the California border. It's the warmest region, with cool microclimates that get significantly less rainfall than other areas (40 percent less than Willamette Valley). Soils are varied and generally derived from bedrock.

Downtown Portland is home to its own winery: Urban Wineworks. The winery is located in a warehouse building where visitors can taste and blend wines, but the wine is vinified in Dundee.

THE OREGON GRAPE VARIETIES

Pinot Noir is the grape most identified with state of Oregon. A blend of clones, both from California and France, has created a great range of complexity in wines. Oregon Pinot Noirs are often more balanced with higher acidity than their California counterparts, and have great fruitier intensity than their counterparts in Burgundy.

Pinot Gris produced in Oregon may stylistically be closer to Alsatian rather than lean, crisp Italian versions made from this grape. These wines can range from light to rich and full bodied.

Chardonnay vines have been pulled out by many growers. The Oregon climate rarely fully ripens these grapes. Chardonnay-based wines can be lean and green.

Merlot grows well in warmer parts of the state, such as in the Walla Walla, Umpqua, Rogue and Applegate Valleys.

Riesling is one of original grapes planted in Oregon and is often used to produce off-dry wines. It has a naturally high level of acidity.

Cabernet Sauvignon, like Merlot, needs the heat of warmer areas. Local Oregon producers often find it hard to compete with better-known and marketed California Cabernets and blends.

Gewürztraminer, like Riesling, has been grown in Oregon since the early days of wine production. It quite full-bodied.

Syrah is a newcomer in Southern Oregon as of 1999. Some of the wines made with it are showing promise.

Pinot Blanc lacks a consistent style. Pinot Blanc in Oregon is priced at same level or higher than Alsatian counterparts on U.S. market.

Müller-Thurgau is a grape that very few producers grow. Most years the wines are lean and low acid, but in ripe vintages they can be pleasant.

Sauvignon Blanc faces tough quality and value competition from Oregon's neighboring states.

OREGON LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Oregon is among the most regulated states in the U.S. In the 1970s growers set out to protect the integrity of their industry by setting stricter standards. According to a 1977 rule by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, all varietal wines need to contain 90 percent of the stated grape varietal, with exception of Cabernet Sauvignon and the Bordelais varietals (at the time the BATF standard was 51 percent, which was later raised to 75 percent.) Oregon was also ahead of the curve on the matter of not misusing European appellation names, it has been illegal here since 1977 to use

European place names like Burgundy or Chablis on labels unless grapes are grown on the appellation listed.

The state had developed its own system before the Federal AVAs were developed in 1983 and Oregon producers can use county names like Yamhill on wines.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT OREGON

- French influence
- Small size of wineries and production
- Unique grapes
- Many ungrafted vines
- Vine exposure to moderating effects of the Pacific Ocean
- Rustic feel
- Dedication to organic farming practices

Drouhin's purchase of land in the Willamette Valley only cemented what was already a strong relationship the state had with France. By the mid 1980s Oregon was bringing in clones from France that no one else had access to, so California producers started buying from Oregon State University, not the University of California at Davis.

The largest wineries in Oregon are small compared to California. Many wineries make less than 35,000 cases, and many make only 2,000 to 5,000 cases. Most vineyards are in the temperate Willamette Valley, located between the Coast and Cascade Mountain Ranges. The smaller regions of the Umpqua, Applegate, and Rogue valleys lie in temperate river valleys bisecting a series of hills.

Oregon vineyards produced 34,400 tons of wine grapes in 2006, a record-breaking amount, according to recently released figures from the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Production reportedly increased 38 percent in 2006 over 2005 because of high yields and newly producing vines.

Warm days and cool nights make the Willamette Valley an ideal growing region for both Burgundian and Alsatian varieties. In the warmer and drier southern valleys, as well as eastern Columbia and Walla Walla Valleys, smaller quantities of Bordeaux and Rhône-style grapes can be grown.

Contrary to popular belief, Oregon vineyard soils aren't extremely fertile. Many vines were planted on their own rootstocks but are now being grafted onto phylloxera-resistant rootstocks.

1995, 1996, and 1997 were incredibly wet vintages, but 1998, 1999, and 2000 were stellar. Heat and drought from 2000 to 2005 resulted in stressed grapes and much more alcoholic, full-bodied wines.

Pinot Noir is the state's signature varietal and plantings are steady increasing. Phylloxera was first documented in Oregon in 1990 in four sites. Until then virtually all vineyards were planted with vines on their own roots and many still are now. Drouhin was one of the first producers to imagine

that the dreaded pest would make it to Oregon sooner or later, and his vineyard was the first large-scale one to be planted on grafted vines.

The state's producers still regard themselves as farmers, reinforcing an image of rustic, easy-going charm in opposition to the big California marketers. Land grants in the 19th century deeded properties to a maximum size of 160 acres, which kept property sizes smaller in Oregon than neighboring states. The feeling and atmosphere is very different than most areas of California, as most wineries don't have fancy tasting rooms and you can still often meet the winemakers.

The state's producers show a strong dedication to a variety of organic farming practices, even if many aren't officially certified. Forty-three percent of Oregon's vineyard land is certified as sustainable, organic, or biodynamic, according to the Oregon Wine Board. Interest in respect for the land and its crops run high and many state organizations cater to producers wishing to incorporate organic practices. Several state organizations that focus on these practices include:

LIVE Inc.

Low Input Viticulture and Enology Inc. certifies vineyards for following international guidelines for environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic accountability. LIVE, Inc. also provides education and resources to winegrowers interested in sustainable farming.

www.liveinc.org

Vinea, The Winegrowers' Sustainable Trust

The Winegrowers Sustainable Trust is a voluntary group of embrace environmentally friendly and socially responsible viticultural practices. Their mission is to develop a sustainable vineyard management program.

www.vineatrust.com

Oregon Tilth Certified Organic

Many of Oregon's wineries are certified organic through Oregon Tilth, which has been a leader in certification since 1974. Oregon Tilth is an internationally recognized organization dedicated to biologically sound agriculture. Their goal is to educate people about developing and using sustainable growing practices that promote soil health, conserve natural resources and prevent environmental degradation.

www.tilth.org

Demeter Certified Biodynamic

The Demeter Association is a leader in biodynamic certification. Its history of promoting sustainability dates back to 1928, when it was founded to support and promote the Biodynamic agricultural methods of Rudolf Steiner. The U.S. Demeter Association certified its first farm in 1982.

www.demeter-usa.org

OREGON VS. BURGUNDY

Burgundy has history and experience on its side. It can rain all year in Burgundy, while most of the rain in Oregon falls between October and April. Soils of the Côte d'Or are rich in limestone, whereas the soils of Oregon have very little limestone.

In Burgundy appellation laws govern everything from the varieties a grower can plant to the age of vines and yields per hectare. Véronique Drouhin-Boss has commented that one major difference in producing wine in the states is that in the U.S. producers are free to do what they want and are not shackled by years of tradition and history.

While wines from the two regions can be very different, even noted professionals have confused the provenance of Pinot Noir in major tastings. The Burgundians simply disdain comparisons by saying they don't make "Pinot Noir." Burgundies are very terroir focused whereas in Oregon the style of the wine is often based on that of the winery.

Viticultural practices, like leaf pulling for sun exposure, are quite similar in both regions. Burgundian practices are generally followed in the vineyards and cellar in Oregon. In fields in terms of spacing, positioning and in cellar in that grapes are brought in cool at harvest.

Despite very different planting densities, yields in both regions surprisingly aren't that different. The backgrounds of wine producers in both areas once might have been quite dissimilar in the days when producers in Burgundy took over the family business and ran it instinctually. However now many producers in Burgundy are also University-trained and well traveled like their New World counterparts.

Some say the quality of wine can be judged by well it ages, but there's evidence that many of the great Oregon Pinot Noirs age well and some Burgundies don't.

Most Oregon Pinot Noirs display more intense primarily fruit flavors. In Burgundy, woody and animal-related aromas and flavors come more into play. Mineral characteristics can often be more center stage in Burgundy and only a component in Oregon. Some say Burgundy is about aroma and Oregon (and other domestic Pinot Noir) is about "mouth feel."

Domestic Pinot Noir usually has higher levels of alcohol and as a result, and by choice stylistically, can be bigger and chewier.

Major Oregon Wine Events

Oregon Wine Auction <http://www.classicwinesauction.com/> wine dinner and auction

Portland Indie Wine Fest <http://www.indiewinefestival.com/> wine tasting featuring producers who make less than 2,000 cases

International Pinot Noir Celebration <http://www.iPinotNoirc.org/> three days of meals, seminars, tours and tastings

Top producers

Abacela Winery
Cristom Vineyards
Domaine Drouhin
Domaine Serene
Eyrie Vineyards
Ponzi Vineyards
Rex Hill Vineyards
Sineann
Westrey Wine Company

Oregon Bullet Points:

- David Lett, Papa Pinot, is the founder of the state's modern-day wine industry.
- The Willamette Valley region of the state is famous for Pinot Noir, with a growing reputation for Chardonnay and Pinot Gris.
- Southern Areas of the state produce warm climate red varietals.
- Oregon has 350 wineries, with more than 200 in Willamette Valley
- The top five grapes are Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling and Merlot, according to the Oregon Wine Board.

15 Oregon AVAs:

Willamette Valley
Chehalem Mountains
McMinnville
Eola-Amity Hills
Yamhill-Carlton
Columbia Gorge
Dundee Hills
Ribbon Ridge
Columbia Valley
Walla Walla Valley
Umpqua Valley
Red Hills Douglas (contained within the Umpqua Valley)
Applegate Valley
Rogue Valley
Southern Oregon (contains Umpqua, Red Hills Douglas, Applegate and Rogue Valley)

Six AVAs within the Willamette Valley:

Chehalem Mountains
Eola-Amity Hills
McMinnville
Dundee Hills
Ribbon Ridge
Yamhill-Carlton District

THE WINES OF IDAHO

IDAHO AO

Here on the 45th parallel, Philo Farnsworth invented television. Local J. R. Simplot was the first to sell McDonald's French fries from this state, North America's largest producer of potatoes. Bald Mountain, Bogus Basin, Brundage and Sun Valley offer some of the deepest powder, longest runs, and off-piste Alpine and Nordic ski trails in the west. In summer the Salmon, Payette, Owyhee and Bruneau Rivers offer up some of the best white-water rafting, sailing and fishing in the world. Also here in the "Gem State" are Hell's Canyon, North America's deepest gorge and Bruneau Dunes State Park, its largest single sand dune.

Naturalists flock to state capital Boise, dubbed the City of Trees, to observe California Condors, Harpy Eagles and other endangered bird species. Cyclists compete in the American version of a Tour de France, the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet Women's Challenge. Golfers choose from 17 public courses.

The state is also highly conservative, neo-prohibitionist, Mormon-influenced local regulatory boards. In fact, the Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission, as well as the individual growers and especially producers, devote several months each year fighting tax increases and the negative image of wine consumption with the Idaho Legislature, which is very alcohol and wine unfriendly. Idaho's history and culture of wine has all but been obliterated by the very same Mormons that are happy to sell grapes, collect taxes and surreptitiously consume large quantities of wine.

Roughly an inverted triangle, Idaho is situated between Oregon and Washington to the west and Wyoming and Montana the east on a similar latitude with Bordeaux. Over the border at the narrow northern tip is Canada's Alberta, home to Banff and Calgary; to the south are Nevada and Utah. Idaho's wineries are hundreds of miles and two mountain ranges from the Pacific Ocean. The Cascade Range to the west in Washington, and the great continental divide made up of the Rocky Mountains to the east further isolate the region. Salt Lake City is 336 miles away, but Boise and its nearby wineries are only an hour or two by air with frequent flights from Seattle or San Francisco.

With at least four strikes against the industry—no identity of its own, being lumped in with Pacific Northwest wines, geographic isolation in a state where outdoors activities are more likely to attract visitors than Idaho's fledgling wine industry; and the exhaustive, all-encompassing uphill battle of the provincial legislature—it is truly a testament to the strength, vision and endurance of major player Ste. Chapelle and a few other hearty souls that the wine industry survives. Ste. Chapelle winery is the state's pioneer and was founded in 1976.

The wine industry is made up of two segments. In the southwest, the growers are clustered around Boise clockwise starting at four o'clock with Gooding, then continuing around to Twin Falls, Owyhee, Ada and Cayon counties. Cayon County, just south of Nampa, especially the Dry Lake Valley sub-zone, is slightly warmer than the Snake River vineyards. Ste. Chapelle is a big customer in this area. The wineries, conversely, are set up in the central west near the Washington and Oregon borders in the high mountain valleys of the Snake and Clear Water Rivers concentrating in

an area named Sunny Slope. The rivers, as they do in all of the premium wine producing zones of the world, provide a climate-tempering influence. Average vineyard elevation is at 2,500 to 3,100 feet, though a handful of vineyards are planted as high as 4,500 feet.

The climate here is similar to Washington's Columbia Valley, with arid, desert-like conditions, warm days and very cool nights. Rainfall is low—fewer than 10 inches annually. Winter weather is severe, and delays bud break. Large diurnal swings mark the short growing season, with differences of 30 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Sixteen hours a day of intense sunshine is common, and serves to offset the cold temperatures. The region is classified as a low Region II on the Winkler-Amerine scale. To the east, the Rocky Mountains protect the area from arctic storms, though the long, cold winter provides continual challenges and sends the vines, and bears, into a long and deep slumber. The most desirable sites are south facing hillside vineyards along the Snake River, where convection currents pull freezing air off of the hillsides during winter and cool the vines during summer.

Idaho History

British fur traders established Fort Boise in 1834. In 1862, gold was discovered and grapes were planted. French and German immigrants are credited with bringing vine cuttings from Europe. Their expertise paid off quickly; at the 1898 Chicago World's Fair a Clearwater River Valley wine won a prize, and at the 1904 International Exposition a Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine placed second behind Château Cheval Blanc.

The first vineyard in Idaho was planted in 1863. A Mr. Walling showed a local reporter from the *Idaho Statesman* his grapes in 1865, demonstrating "that there is no mistake about their bearing and ripening well in this climate. There is no reason why the vine should not be extensively and successfully cultivated here as well as other fruits."

Prohibition delivered the first blow to the industry in the early 20th century. A state ban on production of liquor was enacted in 1919, a full year earlier than the federal Prohibition Act of 1920. It wasn't until 1971 that the industry recovered from the second blow—freedom from the state monopoly liquor stores. At this time, as wines could now be sold in supermarkets, grape growing re-established itself. Concord and several French hybrids dominated the scene at that time, but were quickly replaced with vinifera varieties, especially at the sun-soaked higher elevation sites. Ste. Chapelle produced the first commercial wines in 1976. Several other wineries came onto the scene in the 1980s.

Now, at the dawn of the new century, there are still approximately 30 commercial wineries in the state. With close to two thirds of the state's one million residents being teetotaling Mormons, producers must market their wines outside. Though local wines outsell Gallo in Boise, producers look to other sophisticated markets in the U.S., as well as Europe and Asia. What is sold internally is considered a poor alternative to the more widely accepted and recognized Oregon and especially Washington wines.

The majority of Idaho's vineyards are in the southwest corner near the Snake River. The region offers long growing days and a moderate climate that produces grapes high in acid and sugar. Technological advances have helped, as has global warming. The state produces hardy white

varietals like Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay. The Rieslings can vary from off dry to ice wines. The state also makes Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah.

Idaho Statistics

There are 32 wineries in the state with about 2,000 acres planted to wine grapes.

Ste. Chapelle is the largest winery with about a 200,000-case production the rest are below 25,000 cases.

The majority of the vineyards are in southwestern Idaho located along the Snake River Valley which is about to become the state's first appellation. The reds are pruned for a 2.5-to 3-ton crop and the whites for a 4- to 5-ton crop.

There are currently no AVAs in the state but a petition is in to make the Snake River the first one and it is expected to be approved in April of 2007. The area is 250 miles long and about the size of New Jersey. It includes parts of Eastern Oregon and would include an area known as prehistoric Lake Idaho.

The wineries of Idaho fall under the state classification of AO, or Appellation of Origin. Idaho is officially a sub-zone of tri-state Pacific Northwest that also includes Oregon and Washington. Ste. Chapelle Winery along with the Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission is currently determining boundaries in order to complete a multi-AVA application that may also include two sub-AVAs of Sunny Slope and Arena Valley, a moon crater 20 minutes northwest of the Oregon border, as well.

The Pacific Northwest is the second largest area in North America for vinifera grapes production. Idaho's contribution, as expected, is the smallest. Commission membership is voluntary; many growers and producers exist in complete isolation and obscurity. Total case production is unknown as it is not reported to the commission, but wine production is a large, value-added cultural endeavor in the state, generating an estimated \$10 to 20 million directly to the state's coffers.

Growth is slow, as the industry is in the stranglehold of the local legislature. Several hundred thousand acres of affordable, plantable vineyards with available water lay fallow. Big boy outsiders are sniffing around and beginning to make their moves.

Varieties produced include Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Lemberger (Blaufrankisch), Merlot, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon and Syrah. Experimental plantings of Tempranillo, Valdespino, Viognier and Zinfandel also show some promise.

Key Idaho Personalities

At Camas Prairie Winery Stuart and his wife Sue purchase grapes from independent growers and then field crush them. The winery was founded in 1983. Their eclectic selection includes vinifera varietal selections as well as fruit wines, sparkling wines, honey meads and Tej, Ethiopian hopped mead. The Scotts moved here from Gilroy, California, where Stuart apprenticed with several wineries. Their winery, one of the oldest in the state, is located on Main Street in Moscow, within

walking distance of the University of Idaho. Camas is the name of the local lily, which at one time covered the Palouse hills.

In 1988 Roger and Nancy Jones traded in their potato farming profits for this Glens Ferry winery, vineyards, golf course and restaurant and named it Carmela Vineyards. The vineyards are adjacent to the Three Mile Island State Park, where the Oregon Trail wagon trains crossed 150 years ago. The winery produces estate-grown and bottled Riesling, Chardonnay, Sémillon, Lemberger, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon and also has a golf course and restaurant.

Small-lot, barrel-fermented Chardonnay as well as single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Merlot are Greg and Kristen Koenig's specialties. The winery was founded in 1995. Greg's brother Andrew operates the newly opened European-style eaux-de-vie brandy distillery. They also make potato vodka. The Koenigs also recently completed a winery and visitors' tasting room here in Caldwell, home also to Ste. Chapelle Winery and a very short drive southeast from Boise.

One of Idaho's largest wineries, the former Pintler Cellars is now under the Seattle-based Corus Estates & Vineyards umbrella and has been since 1998. Former owner Brad Pintler is now the general manager and winemaker, helping to retain the small, family-owned reputation, but taking full advantage of the marketing and sales resources of the new corporate owner. The name has been changed to the Sawtooth Winery. Pintler's family history on this property goes back to when his father, Charles, owned these rich pastures. Vines date back to 1982, and include Chenin Blanc, Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon. Recent plantings include Viognier, Pinot Gris, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Syrah. The winery was founded in 1988 and is set on the rim of Hidden Valley near Nampa in the heart of the Snake River Valley, and have a panoramic view of the Owyhee Mountains.

Ste. Chapelle Winery in Caldwell, named for the beautiful La Sainte Chapelle, or Saint's Chapel built by King Louis IX in the 13th century in Paris, is Idaho's largest winery. It was founded in 1976. It is owned by Corus Estates and Vineyards (which also owns other wineries in both Washington and Oregon such as Oregon's Battle Creek). Under Corus Estates' direction Ste. Chapelle is replanting or directing the redevelopment of over 1,000 acres of the original vineyard sites first discovered in the 19th century.

Idaho Varietals

Riesling is produced in a ripe, high-acid, bone-dry style.

Chardonnay is even more popular and styles range from lean and tart to rich, viscous, oaky and buttery.

Bordeaux varietals are coming into their own, though many are bolstered with Washington fruit; similar to Australia's multi-district blends. Ste. Chapelle produces Idaho and Washington-labeled Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Camas and others produce wines made solely with Washington state fruit.

Syrah is also popular, as it is in the rest of the west, though styles here are lighter, less extracted and less oaky. Intense varietal character, structure and longevity mark the best wines of the state.

What's Unique about Idaho

Sandy soils with good drainage

Little rain during growing season creates few mildew problems and fungal diseases

Very short growing season

Low annual growing temperatures compared to Oregon and Washington give wines both high acidity and alcohol (which is sometimes even further enhanced)

All the vines are ungrafted

Well-priced premium wines

Limited yields

Idaho is one of few places in the world where all the vineyards are planted on their own roots. Soil is primarily of glass-laden, nutrient-deficient, volcanic origin. It is composed of sandy loam, silt loam, loamy sand, clay, and sand, and is well-drained. The vine louse Phylloxera cannot move through the soil as it literally desiccates its body.

Regulated water deficit, strict control of bud numbers and annual rye cover crops along with naturally severe weather conditions combine to keep crops down to approximately four tons to the acre. Four tons is high in relation to other premium wine areas, but this higher yield may facilitate dilution of excess acidity and alcohol. Exceedingly low humidity and bone chilling winters keep mildew and insects in check.

Top producers

Bitner Vineyards

Carmela Vineyards

Koenig Vineyards

Pend d'Oreille Winery

Sawtooth Winery

Ste. Chapelle

Major Idaho Wine Events

Beaux Arts Société Wine Auction <http://boiseartmuseum.org/events/winefestival.php> wine auction

Boise River Festival <http://www.boiseonlinemall.com/stores/boiseriverfest.php> wine festival

Sun Valley Wine Auction <http://www.sunvalleycenter.org/wine.html> wine auction

Idaho Bullet Points

The climate is similar to Washington State's Columbia Valley, arid and dessert-like

Ste. Chapelle is the state's largest winery

There is currently a petition out to make Snake River the state's first AVA

THE WINES OF WASHINGTON

Washington's image is focused on Seattle and the big companies located there: Boeing, Microsoft and Starbucks. Producers based around the city primarily source their grapes from the warmer, drier regions of Eastern Washington, where most grapes are grown.

Washington, the "Evergreen State," is rich in unusual natural contrasts. Western Washington is covered with dense forests and snow-covered mountains and enjoys a temperate marine climate, while the eastern state, across the Columbia River and the Cascade Range, is arid, flat and less temperate. Winters are extremely cold, and summers extremely hot, though the Rockies to the west buffer the area from Northern Plains States storms.

The Columbia River is the state's most important resource; it is the biggest source of hydroelectric power in the nation. Mount Rainier is the state's highest peak and is a dormant volcano, while Mount St. Helens, also in the Cascade Range, erupted as recently as 1980.

Columbia Valley is where most of vineyards are and ever more wineries. Wine country here isn't easy to access; it's a three to five hour drive from Seattle, so many of the wineries have offices in Seattle. The climate is continental so everything ripens well from Rhône varieties to Alsatian and Burgundian grapes. The growing season is warm and dry with cool nights. Irrigation is a necessity. Icy winters prevent phylloxera and the well-drained sandy soils help to do so as well, so almost all of the vines are self rooted. Value is a key word in this state and many of the larger producers are making some impressive wines from a price-value perspective.

Washington History

Grapes were grown in Washington as early as 1825, at Fort Vancouver, across the Columbia River from what's now Portland, Oregon. Many settlers were English born or French fur trappers and traders and brought vitis vinifera seeds with them. Table grapes have a long history in many regions of Washington, and Concord grapes were planted in the Yakima Valley as early as 1904.

By 1859 there was an influx of settlers to a large number of areas in Washington. In the Walla Walla Valley, a gentleman by the name of A. B. Roberts planted grapes he purchased from the Willamette Valley and imported 80 different varieties from France. A severe winter freeze in 1883 devastated the industry in the Walla Walla Valley and it would not recover and become a major winemaking area until almost a century later.

In the Yakima Valley of Central Washington, east of Cascade Mountains, German immigrants were planting vineyards in the 1870s. Grape growing was also developing West of the Cascade Mountains and on the Puget Sound Islands.

In 1889 Washington was admitted to the Union. During Prohibition table grapes were in demand for home winemaking. After Prohibition St. Charles Winery on Stretch Island in the Puget Sound became Washington's first bonded winery, it used local grapes and the winemaker was trained in Germany. It operated until the mid 1960s and is now a museum.

In 1934 the Washington State Liquor Board (WSLB), the regulatory agency that still exists today, was created by the Washington Legislature's Steele Act, which also permitted wines made from

Washington grapes to be sold directly to wholesalers and taverns; out of state wines had to go through the liquor board. These measures were created to protect the wines from foreign (i.e. California) competition. So very little outside wine come into the state and what little that did was expensive. Washington wines had no incentive to improve and it wasn't until the 1940s that wines made from grapes outsold wines made from other fruits.

After World War II the new industry continued to develop. In 1945 21 Washington wineries sold 28 million gallons, a record not matched until 1987. In 1949 E. & J. Gallo bought 4,000 tons of Yakima Concord juice, intended for use in its Cold Duck sparkling wine, and the company continued to buy more in the 1950s.

The founding of the modern Washington wine industry dates to 1954, when Nawico of Grandview and Pommerelle Winery of Seattle merged to form American Wine Growers (AWG). In the 1960s Wine writer Leon Adams suggested to AWG that a consultant like André Tchelistcheff, then winemaker at Beaulieu Vineyard in Napa, could improve production in Washington. Tchelistcheff came to Seattle, where his nephew Alex Golitzen lived (who would later start Quilceda Creek Vintners), and agreed to produce AWG's first vinifera wine. In 1967 AWG released its first wines under the Chateau St. Michelle label, which became synonymous with quality and would grow to be the state's largest winery. Chateau St. Michelle as a corporate entity frequently changes names and is now known as Ste. Michelle Wine Estates.

Throughout the 1960s commercial-scale plantings were taking place all over the state, kicking off the modern era of winemaking. In the 1950s and 1960s the state had been best known for its white wines. Over the same time Associated Vintners (AV), set up by professors at the University of Washington, was growing. They opened a production facility near Seattle and produced their first commercial wines in 1967 under the AV label. In 1983 they changed their name to Columbia Winery. In the 1980s the Bordeaux varietals here started to gain prominence, as well as other reds like Lemberger and Syrah.

The Washington wine industry started out making sweet fruit wines and later branched out to drier wines. It has had much success with Riesling, from dry to late harvest styles.

In 1969 the protectionist wine legislation was lifted and imported wines were allowed to be sold in supermarkets, making the domestic market more competitive. Almost all the local Washington wineries closed in the next few years. More land was being planted to grapes across the state, but it was mostly small wineries and took quite a few years for wine quality to improve.

In the 1970s land planted to vines at vineyards began rapidly expanding. In 1988 the first Annual Auction of Washington wines was held and has raised more than \$15 million since its inception. In 1997 the governor proclaimed August to be Washington Wine Month, kicking off a successful statewide promotion. The first Taste Washington, a series of tasting events, was held in 1998. In 2002 the Washington Wine Restaurant Award program was created to honor state and regional restaurants for their support of the Washington wine industry. In 2005 the Washington Wine Commission (WWC) launched a statewide branding initiative "Washington State – The Perfect Climate for Wine."

The Washington Statistics

The state has 427 wineries, 232 of which crush grapes

There are 350 grape growers and more than 30,000 acres planted to vines in Washington.

Top winery sales for varietal wines in 2006 were Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Blends, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc, in that order. Merlot accounted for 18.3 percent of total sales and Cabernet Sauvignon 14.8 percent in 2006, according to the Washington Winery Report.

The state ranks second nationally in wine production (after California).

Production of Washington wine has more than doubled in the past decade, making grapes the fourth largest fruit crop in the state.

The wine industry contributes more than \$3 billion annually to the state economy and employs 15,000 people directly and indirectly, according to the WWC.

Total production within Washington State is 18 million gallons of wine.

Red to white grapes ratio: 47 to 53 percent

Leading red varieties: Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah

Annual rainfall: 8 inches in Eastern Washington (the main grape growing region) and approximately 40 in the Western part of the state.

In 1981 there were 19 wineries, in 1996 there were 80, in 2001 there were 170 and in 2006 were more than 400.

As the U.S.'s second largest wine producing state, Washington State sold the equivalent of 6.4 million cases of wine in 2006, including 937,000 case equivalents of bulk wine. The state crushed 120,500 tons of grapes, and paid an average of \$984 per ton, according to the first Preliminary Washington Winery Report.

Washington currently contains 427 wineries, where Chardonnay remains king and Riesling's not far behind. Among the top 10 varieties in volume, Cabernet Sauvignon reeled in the highest average price at \$1,261, followed closely by its parent variety, Cabernet Franc, at \$1,243.

Soils tend to be sandy loam, which is pretty inhospitable to phylloxera so almost all the vines in Washington are ungrafted and grown on their own root stocks

Leading white varieties: Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon

Key Washington Personalities

Many wineries have their offices in Seattle, even though the grapes come from east of the Mountains. The state's largest wine producer, now called Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, was sold to American Tobacco in 1974 and moved from Seattle to its current headquarters and winemaking facility in Woodinville, about a 45-minute drive from Seattle.

The company's brands include Chateau St. Michelle, Domaine St. Michelle, Columbia Crest, Stimson Lane Cellars, Snoqualmie, Northstar, Red Diamond, Spring Valley Vineyard, Col Solare and 14 Hands. Columbia Crest is the largest producer in the state, at 1.7 million cases a year, followed by Chateau Ste. Michelle at 1.3 million cases. St. Michelle Estate Wines produces roughly half the wine made in Washington State, according to the Washington Wine Commission. The next largest brand is Hogue Cellars, which produces 470,000 cases and is part of Constellation Brands empire, along with Columbia Winery and Covey Run.

While at Ste. Michelle Wine Estates former CEO Allen Shoup initiated a couple of unique joint ventures:

Col Solare is a brand jointly produced by St. Michelle and Piero Antinori, the noted Tuscan producer, and the wine's first vintage was 1995. The wines are big, elegant Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blends with a little Syrah.

Eroica Riesling was made with Dr. Ernst Loosen, one of Germany's Mosel's top producers. The wine has good acid and structure. The changes made at Ste. Michelle (such as lowering yields) to produce this wine are now done with all their Rieslings.

Petaluma's **Bridgewater Mill** wines were made by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates in conjunction with Brian Crosser of Petaluma in Australia.

Ted Baseler became president and CEO in 2000 and shortly after Ste. Michelle announced that it would build a winery in Walla Walla as a home for Northstar, the high-end Merlot the company has been making since 1994.

There are other wineries in the Seattle area, such as DeLille, which makes red and white Bordeaux blends and Syrah and purchases grapes. Other wineries include Hedges Family Estate in Issaquah, Andrew Will Winery on Vashon Island, Cavatappi and Betz Family Winery near Woodinville, Januik Winery in Kirkland and Wilridge Winery, in the City of Seattle.

Andrake Cellars, which produces a variety of reds, and McCrea Cellars, which makes Rhône-style wines are both in the Puget Sound area near Seattle, and source fruit from Eastern vineyards and are located near Olympia.

The **Walla Walla Valley** AVA has been attracting attention for some time, thanks in no small part to dynamo former wine council executive director Krista McCorkle who put the area on the map in the last decade. Leonetti was area's first major and flagship vineyard. It was planted by Gary Figgins in 1974 (Leonetti is the maiden name of Figgins' mother).

Most Walla Walla producers use some purchased grapes to make their wines. Norm McKibben and his Seven Hills Vineyard, which he owns with Gary Figgins and L'Ecole No. 41's Marty Clubb, has sold fruit to many top producers for years. McKibben's nearby vineyard Pepper Bridge was planted from 1991 to 1998 and is significant as well. A winery was built at Pepper Bridge in 2000.

Christophe Baron, a Frenchman fanatic for Rhône varieties, set up vineyards in the Walla Walla area as well when he saw pudding stones that reminded him of those in the Rhône Valley. His winery, Cayuse, grows other Rhône varieties like Grenache and Mourvèdre as well. The old guard of wineries that created the region's reputation includes Woodward Canyon, L'Ecole No. 41, Leonetti, Seven Hills, Waterbrook and Canoe Ridge. St. Michelle Wine Estates even opened a winery here for Northstar its high-end Merlot brand.

Red Mountain, part of the Yakima Valley AVA, is rapidly becoming one of the state's hottest growing regions. Jim Holmes and John Williams bought land here in 1972 that would later become Kiona and planted Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling. They parted company 20 years later and Williams kept the original Kiona Vineyards and Holmes took some of their other vineyard land that became Ciel du Cheval homage to Horse Heaven Hills south of Red Mountain).

Producer Dave Gelles and his wife Tricia bought land on Red Mountain in 1982 and the land was named Klipsun, a Chinook Indian term for the end of the day. Tom and Anne-Marie Hedges of Hedges also purchased land on Red Mountain in 1989 and planted classics: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Alex Golitzen of Quilceda Creek also buys fruit here.

THE WASHINGTON AVAs

The state has nine AVAs

Yakima Valley

Became an AVA in 1983 and was the state's first

More than 45 wineries, one third of the state's vineyards and 11,000 vineyard acres

The Columbia River also moderates temperatures here and can protect the region from freezes. It has mostly sandy, loam soils.

The area has been used as a wine region name since the late 1960s. It is wholly contained within larger Columbia Valley AVA. Grapes for juice and wine have been grown here since the early 1900s when irrigation transformed a desert-like valley into an agricultural paradise.

Soils are mostly volcanic and alluvial sand. The weather is a little cooler here than other areas, going five to ten degrees below temperatures in the Columbia Basin. Red grapes grow well here and cool nights give them good acidity.

Hogue Cellars, the state's third-biggest winery owned by Constellation Brands, grows fruit here. Their vineyard yields tend to be high, not surprising for a relatively commercial winery.

Primary grapes: Chardonnay, Riesling, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon

Walla Walla Valley

Became an AVA in 1984

100 wineries, more than 1,200 acres of vineyards

The region has hills that protect it from winter winds. Soils tend to be more gravel laden and hold heat well. Syrah grows particularly well here.

The appellation crosses into Oregon, near the town of Milton-Freewater. It is entirely enclosed within the Columbia Valley AVA. Geographic names lend themselves to winery names: there really is a Woodward Canyon, Mill Creek, Patit Creek and a Walla Walla River, all within the greater Walla Walla Basin and appellation.

This is one of warmer areas of the state with degree days in 3,000 Fahrenheit range, average rainfall about 20 inches, which is lighter than other eastern Washington regions. Winter freeze is an issue here. Farming is still important here, the area grows wheat, strawberries and the famous Walla Walla onions.

This valley is at the eastern edge of the geological events that created the Columbian Gorge, so huge basaltic lava flows created the Columbia Plateau (which includes the Walla Walla plateau). Two types of soil are found here: silty loam and a rocky layer.

Primary grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Syrah

Columbia Valley

Became an AVA in 1984

It is the world's largest viticultural region with 100 wineries and more than 16,000 vineyard acres.

This AVA is Washington's largest and contains Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills, Horse Heaven and both the Yakima and Walla Walla Valleys within its borders. It produces 90 percent of the grapes in Washington State. The AVA is enormous, and most vineyards lie along the Columbia River. The northern subregion is desert-like and has only a few wineries.

The area is very dry and sees little rain, soils are primarily sandy with low water-retention capacity. The region sees lots of daylight hours and summer temperatures reaching 100 degrees. The Columbia River moderates the temperature at night bringing it down as low as 40 degrees Fahrenheit. This cooling nighttime air is what gives Washington wines from this region their crisp acidity.

The Columbia Valley AVA reaches down from central Washington and crosses the Columbia River into Oregon, spanning the Columbia River Gorge, which stretches 80 miles. Wind is a huge problem here. In the Miocene era, 12 to 17 million years ago, volcanoes erupted, cracked the earth and poured out molten rock, as the lava cooled it became the dark, grey basalt rock. Dormant volcanoes still dot in the area, such as Mount Adams in Washington and Mount Hood in Oregon. There are less wineries located on the Washington side than the Oregon side of this AVA.

The area is home to one of the state's most prominent producers: Bookwalter. Jerry Bookwalter opened his winery in 1983 and had gone to the University of California at Davis. In 1997 his son John returned to the winery with a marketing degree and a decade of experience which has had a positive effect on the wines.

Columbia Crest has a winery near Patterson which is largest single winery in the state. The well-regarded Champoux Vineyard, locally referred to as the Mercer Ranch (as it was originally planted by Don Mercer) is here as are wineries such as Quilceda Creek, Woodward Canyon, Andrew Will and Powers Winery.

St. Michelle Wine Estates planted its Cold Creek Vineyard just north of the Yakima Valley on a high plateau that moderates temperature. The winery's Indian Wells Vineyard is just across the Columbia River and north of Cold Creek on Wahluke Slope (itself a long, broad plateau on west and north side of the Columbia River).

Primary grapes: Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah

Puget Sound

Became an AVA in 1995

100 wineries are located within the greater Puget Sound region, more than 80 vineyard acres

The core of the area is on the areas that are in the Puget Sound, and the appellation extends across the Sound, west to Seattle and beyond to the Cascade Mountains. It begins at the Washington state border with British Columbia and goes down just south of Olympia. Most wineries can be found along the Interstate 5 corridor and continue west to include the Olympic Peninsula. Many of these wineries have small production and limited availability.

The Olympic Mountains offer some protection from the Pacific Ocean. Temperatures vary greatly. The area was geologically created by the advance and withdrawal of the Vashon glaciations about 10,000 years ago. Soils are silty to sandy with round stones. Most grapes don't thrive in this cool a climate and wines tend to be lower in alcohol.

Primary grape varieties: Madeleine Angevine (a white variety developed in the Loire in the 19th Century), Siegerebbe (a German cross between Gewürztraminer and a red table grape), Müller-Thurgau, Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris

Red Mountain

Became an AVA in 2001, 12 wineries, over 710 vineyard acres

This region is located within the larger Yakima Valley, at its easternmost tip in the Yakima Valley near Benton City. It sits on a southwest-facing slope east of the Yakima River. The name is misleading as the soil is not red (as in Oregon's Dundee Hills). The name refers to a native grass that has a red blossom in spring, making the hillsides look red for a few months. It's not much of a mountain either, more of a plateau.

The nearby Yakima River helps moderate any temperature extremes and Red Mountain is one of the warmest sub regions of the Yakima Valley with temperatures almost 10 degrees higher than in

Western Yakima Valley. The grapes' ability to ripen is never an issue but keeping alcohol levels down is. The area is hot during the day and cool at night.

Soils tend to be sandy loam, lake bedrock with calcareous patches and some volcanic ash. Major wineries include Hedges, Kiona Vineyards, Terra Blanca and Hightower.

It's a small region that produces unique wines, such as full-bodied Merlot with intense tannins, more like a Cabernet Sauvignon which also needs ageing when from Red Mountain. The individual vineyards are almost always designated on wine labels, which has helped to make the region well known.

Just north of Red Mountain is the Hanford Site, the U.S. Department of Energy's nuclear facility, where components of World War II's Manhattan project were assembled. The facility provided the nuclear materials used in bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan and ended the war. Plutonium production continued through the 1980s and in the 1990s the U.S. government spent billions to clean up the waste, which doesn't seem to have affected surrounding agricultural land.

Primary grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Sangiovese

Columbia Gorge

Became an AVA 2004, it includes area in Washington state and Oregon

More than 15 wineries and approximately 350 vineyard acres

It is located in the southern part of the state and has moist marine influences from the Columbia River meeting up with dry air from eastern Washington. So warm days and cool nights provide for good acid levels in grapes.

Primary grape varieties: Chard, Gewürztraminer, Riesling and Pinot Gris

Horse Heaven Hills

Became an AVA in 2005

4 wineries and 6,040 vineyard acres

Bounded on the north by the Yakima Valley and the south by the Columbia River. Proximity to the river moderates temperatures here. Grapes have been grown here since the 1970s.

Primary grape varieties: Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon

Wahluke Slope (pronounced Wa louk)

Became an AVA in 2006

3 wineries and 5,200 vineyard acres

Bounded by the Columbia River to the west and south and the Saddle Mountains to the North. It has one of the driest, warmest climates in the state allowing for complete ripening.

Primary grape varieties: Riesling, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon

Rattlesnake Hills

Became an AVA in 2006
20 wineries and more than 1,500 vineyard acres

The area encompasses an expanse of hills and sits in a higher elevation than the surrounding Yakima Valley region. Vineyards here date back to the late 1960s.

Primary grape varieties: Merlot, Syrah, Malbec, Chardonnay, Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon

An application is currently in to make Lake Chelan a 10th AVA and is expected to be approved by the end of 2007.

Cascade Mountains divide the state into two different growing regions, with precipitation to the west and dry, arid conditions to the East. Of all the AVAs only one, **Puget Sound**, lies west of Cascades. The weather is cool and damp here and frost is not generally a problem, although temperatures never get as warm as other growing regions. Most vineyards are planted with hybrids and early ripening vinifera. Wines are generally light and lean often lower alcohol very diff from Eastern Washington. Fruit wines are also produced in the Puget Sound.

Spokane is the second largest city in Washington with a cool climate with summer weather reaching a max of only 80 degrees. The city lies along the Spokane River, 2,000 feet above sea level. It's a marginal climate for grapes, especially in winter when they can freeze.

The first winery to open here was Worden's Washington Winery in 1980 and changed its name in 2000 to Wyvern Cellars. In 1982 a joint project between Mike Conway and Hogue cellars Latah Creek opened, Conway became the sole owner two years later but Latah still buys grapes from Hogue.

Mountain Dome winery was established as a sparkling wine house in 1984 at the same time Arbor Crest Wine Cellars opened. David and Harold Mickle decided that Spokane was not the right climate for growing grapes, started a winery instead and bought grapes from the Columbia Valley. In 1984 they bought the Riblet Mansion, a historic building now known as Arbor Crest House. They planted it with three sparkling wine varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Munier with a little Pinot Gris.

THE WASHINGTON VARIETALS

Bordeaux varieties are the top red grapes, just like in California. The amount of **Rhône varieties** planted in the state is also on the rise.

Merlot one of state's top grapes, frequently used in blends. In Washington, Merlot-based wines then to bigger and more tannic than their brethren in Bordeaux. The state's Merlot is known for sweet cherry-berry flavors and aromas like mint, cigar box, nutmeg and cardamom.

Cabernet Sauvignon when young may seem subtler than Merlot but when it ages it gets the typical dark fruit, chocolate, herb and bell pepper characteristics. It often needs a few years of aging to show well.

Syrah may be the state's most respected variety. It was first planted in the 1980s. It is often planted on warmer sites. This grape produces big, dark, spicy, rich wines with aromas and flavors of blackberries, black currants, roasted coffee and leather. The move to planting Syrah was initiated by David Lake, Master of Wine, of Columbia Winery and Mike Sauer of Red Willow vineyard. Columbia made its first Syrah in 1988. Other producers started planting it and in 1996 it survived the big freeze when other varieties didn't.

Cabernet Franc was once considered a blending grape the state is now producing more varietal versions on its own. It is a hardy grape which adds firm tannins to softer wines. By itself it has spicy notes with hints of coffee and blueberries.

Lemberger can vary from light and fruit to big, rich and extracted. This grape is widely grown in Austria, where it's known as Blaufränkisch, and in Washington it resembles a California Zinfandel: it's big, intense and has low acidity.

Other reds include Sangiovese, Malbec, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Nebbiolo.

Chardonnay is one of top grapes, and produces wines that range from dreadful to light, crisp and there are buttery, oaky versions. Oak is often used in Washington with a lighter touch, making for more delicate wines with more varietal character.

Riesling was one of first grapes planted in Washington. Wines are usually off-dry that are made with this grape. These wines often have floral aromas as well as notes of apricot and peach. Late-harvest wines are also made with Riesling.

Sauvignon Blanc is also known as Fumé Blanc here as in California. This grape can be fruity and acidic and produces wines of very different styles.

Sémillon can be crisp when young and age into mellow, nutty wines that are also susceptible to Botrytis cinerea. It also makes great late-harvest wines. Flavors range from crisp citrus and melon to fig, pears and vanilla.

Gewürztraminer was a success in the early days because it's a hardy grape. It can be dry to off-dry in terms of styles. These wines can have flavors of allspice and tropical fruit.

Chenin Blancs don't tend to very complex in Washington. They are produced in dry, off-dry and late-harvest styles.

Viognier, like Syrah, has been experiencing growth in Washington. The wines can be very fruity.

Other white grapes include Aligote, Madeleine Angevine, Muscat Canelli, Müller-Thurgau, Pinot Gris, Siegerrebe and Rousanne.

WASHINGTON STATE LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Wine in the state of Washington is sold by both the Washington State Liquor Control Board's (WSLCB) stores and wholesalers.

The Washington Wine Commission (WWC) has been state mandated since 1987. It's a non-profit, trade association focused on the marketing, promotion and research of the grapes and wines of Washington state. While huge producer Ste. Michelle Wine Estates could easily dominate, it has backed the proposition that publicity for anyone is good for the state as whole. Most of the WWC's funding comes from an assessment on wine sold and grapes grown. Current fees are four cents a gallon on wine and \$6 per ton of grapes, a ballot is in the raise both figures respectively to eight cents and \$12.

The Wine Advisory Board (WWB) is a subcommittee of the WWC that oversees and directs the viticultural and enological research of the state's wine industry. The WWB is composed of vintners, growers and researchers.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT WASHINGTON

Washington State's northern latitude provides an average of 17.4 hours of sunlight during the summer growing season, two more than California's prime growing regions.

Wines in Washington differ from many of their California counterparts because they have both good fruit and acidity. The acidity is preserved by the coolness of the winter season.

The vines are almost entirely on their own roots. With the state's problem with winter freezes more crops could be damaged or lost if vines were grafted.

The state produces more than 20 grape varieties.

Soils are generally sandy and young in their lifecycle.

Washington Wine Events

www.Washingtonshingtonwine.org is a good resource

Taste Washington <http://www.tasteWashingtonshington.org/> large walk-around tasting held in different cities each year

Auction of Washington Wine <http://www.auctionofWashingtonshingtonwines.org/> dinner, picnic, wine tastings and auction

Washington Wine Restaurant Awards

<http://www.Washingtonshingtonwine.org/restaWashingtonrds2007/splash.cfm> award ceremony honoring restaurants that serve Washington Wines

Top Producers

Abeja
Bookwalter Winery
Buty Winery
Cadence
Cayuse Vineyards
DeLille Cellars
Hightower Cellars
Hogue Cellars
Isenhower Cellars
Leonetti Cellars
McCrea Cellars
Pepper Bridge Winery
Quilceda Creek Vintners
Reininger Winery
St. Michelle Wine Estates

Washington Bullet Points

- The bulk of vineyards are in the eastern part of the state, which is arid
- Most of the state's vineyards are in the Columbia Valley
- This is the country's second largest wine producing state

There are nine AVAs

Yakima Valley
Walla Walla Valley
Columbia Valley (which contains Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills, Horse Heaven Hills, Yakima and the Walla Walla Valley)
Puget Sound
Red Mountain
Columbia Gorge
Horse Heaven Hills
Wahluke Slope
Rattlesnake Hills

THE WINES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

This is one of Canada's four main wine producing regions. The others are Ontario, outside of Toronto, and the less important regions of Québec and Nova Scotia.

Given climatic conditions here grapes are grown near bodies of water that moderate the severe winters. Until the 1970s the majority of Canadian wines were winter-hardy labrusca varieties such as Concord and Niagara, next were easy ripening, winter-resistant French hybrids like Vidal Blanc and Seyval Blanc and Marcéhal Foch. Since the late 1980s producers have put greater emphasis on vinifera varieties. Pinot Blanc and Merlot are specialties of British Columbia.

Sweet wines produced here have always been of good quality, especially icewine and late-harvest Riesling. Canada is the world's largest producer of icewine.

The Canadian wine industry dates to the early 1800s, when vines were planted along the Credit River west of Toronto. By 1890 there were 41 commercial wineries 35 in Ontario. In the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia it was the church, rather than the farmers to encourage wine production.

Prohibition, which began in Canada in 1916, spurred the wine trade. Thanks to some fancy lobbying wine was excluded from the ban of alcohol. By the time it was repealed in 1927, six years early than in the U.S., 57 winery licenses had been granted in Ontario alone.

That same year the provincial liquor board system was created and government monopolies took control of the sale of alcoholic beverages. By the mid 1990s Alberta had privatized and British Columbia and Manitoba had some privately owned wine stores.

In 1988 an appellation system called the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) was introduced, first in Ontario and then British Columbia. VQA legislation in British Columbia establishes the legal framework for an appellation of origin system as well as minimum standards that need to be met in order to obtain VQA approval.

The British Columbia Statistics

Number of wineries 131, 371 vineyards and 5,462 acres under vine

Most wineries are small and operating on plots of land that are on average seven acres

The area under vine has risen slightly more than 20 percent in two years, according to Appellation America, and further increases are expected.

Red grape variety planting pulled ahead of white in 2006. Hybrids that once dominated now account for only 2 percent of plantings, according to the last Vineyard Census.

Merlot is the top red grape and Chardonnay is the top white.

Although only a quarter of the country's wineries are in the extreme west, British Columbia produces a significant amount of the country's best wines

Average sunshine hours during the growing season are 1,423 in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. A high proportion of grapes require chapitalization.

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA APPELLATIONS

There are five designated viticultural areas

Fraser Valley

10 wineries covering 70 acres of vineyards

Is the smallest AVA and is near Vancouver. It was a prominent trade and travel route during the province's first gold rush in 1858. The grape-growing region is located one hour east of Vancouver. It is the largest agricultural region in British Columbia.

Because of the cool, maritime climate here and Vancouver Island means early ripening varieties grown best here, such as Ortega, Chardonnay Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris

Domaine de Chaberton opened in 1991, south of Langley, almost at the U.S. border. It was almost the only winery for a decade. Township 7 Vineyards and Winery opened in 2001 and a few others opened in 2002. The fertile delta south of the Fraser River has long been home to dairy farming and berry farms. In 1998 Columbia Valley Classics, British Columbia's first modern fruit winery opened. It's a farm, orchard and popular resort destination for Vancouver residents. The winery makes wines from blueberries, red, white and black currants, raspberries, gooseberries, rhubarb and kiwi fruit.

Vancouver Island

25 wineries cover 200 acres

This area is home to the capital of British Columbia: Victoria. It is the largest North American Pacific Island and home to the area's newest winegrowing region. It's a marginal grape growing area, loganberry wine was made here in the 1920s.

Faced with a loganberry surplus, farmers formed the Growers' Wine Company in 1923 to create a market for the loganberry. British Columbia ended four years of Prohibition in 1921 and demand for wine was met with berries, by 1926 Growers' was buying more than 80 percent of the loganberries and these wines continued to be sold until the 1960s when a virus decimated the loganberry fields. By the mid 1930s Growers had taken over all of the island wineries and was buying Okanagan grapes because there were no significant vineyards on the island at the time.

The first modern commercial vineyard began in 1970 with an experimental planting by Dennis Zanatta, a former dairy farmer. The government used the vineyard to assess if different varieties could grow there from 1983 to 1990 and identified Ortega, Auxerrois and Pinot Gris as promising. Dennis and his daughter Loretta opened the island's first modern winery Vigneti Zanatta in 1992. It also has a restaurant and a wine bar.

Almost every vineyard grows Ortega, a cross between Müller-Thurgau and Siegerrebe. The grape was developed in Germany to be a cool climate variety, maturing early but achieving relatively high sugar levels. It makes fruity and dry wines and is a workhouse grape that has been a hard sell. Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer also grow well here.

Similkameen Valley

13 wineries and 200 acres

The area is about a three-hour drive from Vancouver and is protected from coastal rains by two steep mountain ranges. There was extensive fruit and vegetable farming here for more than a century. The growing season is hot and arid and vineyards need to be irrigated. The areas where there are vineyards are in a narrow valley with mountains on both sides that with lots of rocks hold the heat in making it a good place to grow red grapes. Similkameen is hotter in summer and colder in winter than the Okanagan. There are virtually no pests and mildew is not a problem. There are few wineries here.

Dominant varieties are major Bordeaux red varieties, as well as Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer.

Okanagan Valley

More than 70 wineries and supplies 95 percent of the province's wine

The area is a four-hour drive from Vancouver and covers some 5,000 acres. It is the oldest wine producing region in the province.

There are five subregions: Kelowna, Naramata, Okanagan Falls, Golden Mile and Black Sage/Osoyoos.

The first vines here planted by French priest, Charles Pandosy, in 1859. In 1925 J.W. Hughes, a horticulturist from Iowa, began planting both red and white wine grapes. The first important vineyards were developed in 1928 with labrusca vines and their grapes were sold to local wineries. Because local scientists opposed vinifera, new growers initially choose French and American hybrids that were hardy but produced disappointing wine.

NK'Mip is the area's first Aboriginal-owned winery. It is a joint venture with Vincor International, which was acquired by Constellation Brands last year. The 370-member Osoyoos band operates nine other businesses including Inkameep Vineyards. Established in 1968, this was the band's first commercial venture in modern times. Now 270 acres in size, it was the earliest large planting of vinifera grapes in the south Okanagan. They are building a resort and a casino at the winery as well. Vincor is the largest vineyard owner on the Osoyoos Lake Bench and owns 49 percent of NK'Mip. The lake moderates frost in spring and fall.

Since the term "Reserve" would have been ambiguous, Nk'Mip Cellars dipped into the native language still spoken by band elders and found QWAM QWMT as the designation for its premium wines. The term, pronounced kw-em kw-empt, means achieving excellence.

Mount Boucherie is in the Okanagan valley and some of the region's best vineyards are on its southeastern flank where vines get more sunlight. It was home to orchards before there were vineyards.

Mission Hill has been rebuilt here and is the region's most visited winery. More than 150,000 visitors come a year. It opened in 1966 and has a magnificent view of Okanagan Lake from the mountain. Anthony von Mandl has owned it since 1981. It has a restaurant and amphitheater and cellars dug into the mountainside. In 1992 John Simes who had been working in New Zealand before he came to the Okanagan and made a Chardonnay for Mission Hill that won an award at the London Wine Competition in 1994 and put Mission Hill and British Columbia on the map. He is still making Chardonnay and Bordeaux blends.

Richard Stewart bought a vineyard here in 1956 and in 1989 Quails' Gate winery opened. He originally ordered North American vines but Chasselas, an important white grape in Switzerland, was accidentally substituted. It grew well there and Stewart replaced the native American vines first with hybrids and then with vinifera like Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling.

More than 60 varieties are grown and there are no restrictive appellational rules. The region is defining itself. Almost every kind of wine is produced from sparkling to ice wine.

One of the world's most northerly wine regions, stretching north from 49th parallel for about 100 miles. Defining feature is Okanagan Lake, largest of the Valley's chain of lakes, which tempers the southern heat. Vineyards in the s of this area are mostly on sand or well-drained sandy clay loam and mostly on slopes.

Lake Breeze was founded by former South African businessman Paul Moser in 1994 and he even planted South Africa's signature grape on his estate and recreated a Cape-style winery on the property. The winery has a restaurant with outdoor dining. Winery producers more white than reds, from grapes like Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Sémillon. He also makes Pinot Noir and Merlot.

Golden Mile area of the Okanagan got its name from the Gold Rush that happened in the last decade of the 19th Century. The area has well-drained clay and glacial gravel soils. Fairview Cellars at the northern end of the area produces only reds (Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon) as this is one of the hottest areas in Canada where grapes are grown.

Inniskillin, the noted Ontario producer, has its Dark Horse Vineyard here, which was planted in 1967. The winery produces Pinot Noir and full-bodied Bordeaux-style wines. Inniskillin's parent company Vincor International markets wines from Ontario and British Columbia and its Canadian brands include Inniskillin, Jackson-Triggs and Sumac Ridge.

Black Sage Road vineyards are where the Sandhill label sources some of its fruit. The area is on beach sand, with very lean soil. The west side of the valley has heavier soil with gravel and clay, so together the valley can produce both Bordeaux and Rhône varieties, the west can do Pinot Noir, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. Most grapes grown in the Black Sage Road vineyards are processed in wineries elsewhere in the Okanagan.

Gulf Islands

8 wineries with 95 acres planted to vines

These islands were originally home to Coast Salish First Nations people, remnants of settlements dating back 2,000 years have been found here. The 1850s Gold Rush first brought settlers here.

There's even a winery right in downtown **Vancouver**: The Blossom Winery opened in 2001 in downtown Richmond, part of the city of Vancouver, in a strip mall.

The British Columbia Varietals

60 different varietals are grown in the region, and the ration is 48 to 52 percent white to red

Chardonnay is the top planted and top selling white grape variety

Pinot Gris is the second most planted and second best selling white grape

Other important white grapes include Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc and Riesling

Merlot is the top planted and top selling red grape variety

Cabernet Sauvignon is the second most planted red grape variety and is popular on its own and in blends

Syrah has recently become a hot varietal

Other important red grapes include Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc and Gamay Noir

British Columbia Restrictions

When the free trade agreement was concluded between Canada and the U.S. in 1988 it stripped away protectionism for the Canadian wines and more than two thirds of the Okanagan vineyards were pulled out after the 1988 harvest. The industry regrouped in 1990, forming the British Columbia Wine Institute and adapting the Ontario-developed VQA program which imposed wine standards and testing.

VQA standards include:

Wines bearing the label designation "Product of British Columbia" must be produced from 100 percent British Columbia-grown grapes

Wines bearing the name of a viticultural area must be made from at least 95 percent grapes from that area

Vintage dated wines must be made with at least 95 percent wine obtained from the harvest year stated

Wines labeled at estate bottled must be produced only from grapes grown in a vineyard owned or controlled by the winery and all the steps, from crushing to bottling, must be performed at the winery.

A wine tasting panel tests and approves each wine and participation is voluntary.

VQA standards monitor:

Geographical indication, vineyard designation, wine categories (such as sugar content and varieties) and quality standards

What's Unique About British Columbia

It is one of the only wine growing regions north of the 45th parallel

Moderating effects of Lake Okanagan allow for grape ripening

The bulk of Canada's top wines are produced here

British Columbia Wine Events

Victoria Festival of Wine <http://victoriafestivalofwine.com/> wine and food tastings and seminars

Okanagan Wine Festival <http://www.owfs.com/> wine and food events

British Columbia Restaurant Hall of Fame Gala <http://www.bcrfa.com/> a gathering celebrating local, area restaurants

Top producers

Burrowing Owl Estate Winery

Inniskillin

Jackson-Triggs Vintners

Lake Breeze Vineyards

Mission Hill Family Estate

NK'Mip Cellars

Sandhill Winery

British Columbia Bullet Points

- Region is one of few above the 45th parallel, one of the world's most northern wine growing regions
- Climate is moderated by influence of Lake Okanagan
- A significant amount of Canada's top wines come from British Columbia

The region has five designated viticultural areas:

Okanagan Valley

Similkameen Valley

Fraser Valley

Vancouver Island

Gulf Islands

Sixty different varieties are produced.

