

ABOUT OREGON WINES

Craftsmanship

Oregon's winemakers focus on small batch, high-quality wines

Oregon is a special place with a commitment to producing high-quality wines. On a national scale, Oregon is the third largest viniferous grape producing state, yet remains focused on producing small-batch artisan wine. In fact, most Oregon wineries are relatively small, producing on average only 5,000 cases a year.

Keeping wine production small ensures that winemakers have the time and energy to nurture each and every vine, cluster and barrel into wines of superior flavor and concentration worthy of the Oregon stamp. It also allows winemakers time to collaborate with one another, experiment with new varieties, practice earth-friendly growing techniques and-perhaps best of all-directly share their results with the wine enthusiast.

Really. in Oregon, it's often the winemaker behind the counter pouring the wine. And in many cases, visitors get to taste small-batch vintages only available in the winery's tasting room. Now that's worth the trip alone. Oregon's vintners are waiting.

Food and Wine

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.

So really, there's no mystery to food and wine pairing with Oregon wines-look no further than the kinds of ingredients that can be found from Oregon's farms, rivers, and coast. A simple guideline might be: what grows together, goes together.

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 desert 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

The Oregon Experience

Experience Oregon with more wine information, history and background about Oregon wine.

Winter Wine Pairings

The Oregon Experience continues with food and wine recommendations directly from some of Oregon's leading vintners.

Sustainability

Oregon's commitment to sustainability has deep roots

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. Nearly half - 47% - 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.

View the total sustainably certified acres in Oregon (May 2013).

Certifying Agencies

Low Input Viticulture and Enology - LIVE

LIVE aims to preserve human and natural resources in the wine industry of the Pacific Northwest. We accomplish this through internationally-recognized third-party certification of collaborative science-based winegrowing standards of Integrated Production.



Demeter Certified Biodynamic®



In a word, biodynamic farming is rigorous. It means growing grapes and making wines completely free of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. A step further than organic, Biodynamic farming means managing the entire farm (or vineyard) as a living organism, with a high degree of self-sufficiency. The Demeter Association is the world's leader of Biodynamic certification and awareness. It has a long history of promoting sustainability, dating 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.

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 of organic farmers, gardeners and consumers who are dedicated to biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Their goal is to educate people about the need to develop and use sustainable growing practices that promote soil health, conserve natural resources, and prevent environmental degradation while producing a clean and healthful food supply.



Salmon-Safe

Founded in 1995 by an Oregon-based river and native fish protection organization, Salmon-Safe has become one of the nation's leading regional eco-labels. Erosion and runoff from hillside vineyards can bring silt into streams, reducing the ability of native salmon to survive. That's why Salmon-Safe has partnered with LIVE, VINEA, and Oregon Tilth to work with pioneering wine grape growers to protect Oregon's important salmon watersheds. Since first certifying vineyards in the Willamette Valley more than a decade ago, Salmon-Safe has certified 110 Oregon vineyards representing a third of Oregon's wine grape acreage. Look for the Salmon-Safe label on wine and you'll know that your purchase helps keep rivers clean so that salmon can spawn and thrive.



USDA Organic

USDA's National Organic Program regulates the standards for any farm, wild crop harvesting, or handling operation that wants to sell an agricultural product as organically produced. U.S. producers are turning to certified organic farming systems as a potential way to lower input costs, decrease reliance on nonrenewable resources, capture high-value markets and premium prices, and boost farm income. Organic farming systems rely on ecologically based practices such as cultural and biological pest management, exclusion of all synthetic chemicals, antibiotics, and hormones in crop and livestock production.



Vinea, The Winegrowers' Sustainable Trust

The Winegrowers Sustainable Trust is a voluntary group of winegrowers who have embraced environmentally friendly and socially responsible viticultural practices. Their mission is to develop a sustainable vineyard management program that will be internationally recognized for its strict environmental standard and high quality farming practices.

